



SANTINIKETAN  
LIBRARY

*Class No.* **201**...

*Author No.* **P49**...

*Shelf No.*.....

*Accession No.* **247**











# Religion and Historic Faiths



# Religion and Historic Faiths

BY

OTTO PFLEIDERER, D.D.

Professor in the University of Berlin

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN BY

DANIEL A. HUEBSCH, PH.D.

*Authorized Edition*

LONDON

T. FISHER UNWIN

NEW YORK: B. W. HUEBSCH

1907

**COPYRIGHT, 1907, BY  
B. W. HUEBSCH**

**"RELIGION UND RELIGIONEN"**  
Published May 15, 1906.  
Privilege of Copyright in the United States  
reserved under the Act approved March 3, 1905, by  
J. F. LEHMANN, Munchen.  
**PRINTED IN U. S. A.**

## PREFACE

THE lectures here published were delivered at the University of Berlin during the last winter semester before an audience composed of students of all the faculties and older non-collegiates; some of the lectures were also given in a public course at a high-school. The hearty reception accorded to them by both audiences was a pleasing proof of present-day active growth of interest in things religious in all circles.

On the basis of stenographic reports, without material change, I have prepared the contents of these lectures for press; so that, as far as possible, the spirit of the spoken word would be caught by the reader. The limited period set for each lecture required a curtailment of the quotations, but in most cases, they have been inserted in this volume at proper length. The close of the semester prevented the actual delivery of the concluding lecture on Islam; completeness, however, made such an omission here impossible.

It is self-evident that within the narrow limits of these lectures only the essentials of the wealth of material afforded by the history of religion could be chosen for emphasis. In the selection, my deci-

## Preface

sion was guided by the wish to draw the clearest possible picture of the characteristic features of the religions, showing their points of difference and of contact. The three introductory lectures will make clear the view-points which served as my standards. Perhaps it would be advisable to recommend to those readers who are less interested in the philosophical reflections contained in the opening lectures, that they begin at the fourth lecture, and after having read the historical matter, turn back to the portion devoted to the philosophy of religion.

For deeper study, I refer the reader to my larger work "Religionsphilosophie auf geschichtlicher Grundlage," (3 Aufl. 1896), and to the text-books on the general history of religion by Tiele, Chantepie de Saussaye, Orelli and Menzies; in them, lists of books treating of the separate religions are given.

OTTO PFLEIDERER.

GROSS-LICHTERFELDE, *March*, 1906.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
I THE ESSENCE OF RELIGION . . . . .	9
II RELIGION AND ETHICS . . . . .	29
III RELIGION AND SCIENCE . . . . .	47
IV THE BEGINNINGS OF RELIGION . . . . .	68
V THE CHINESE RELIGION . . . . .	89
VI THE EGYPTIAN RELIGION . . . . .	103
VII THE BABYLONIAN RELIGION . . . . .	120
VIII THE RELIGION OF ZARATHUSTRA AND THE MITHRA CULT . . . . .	134
IX BRAHMANISM AND GAUTAMA BUDDHA . . . . .	153
X BUDDHISM . . . . .	170
XI THE GREEK RELIGION . . . . .	190
XII THE RELIGION OF ISRAEL . . . . .	211
XIII POST-EXILIC JUDAISM . . . . .	231
XIV CHRISTIANITY . . . . .	252
XV ISLAM . . . . .	274





# Religion and Historic Faiths

## I

### THE ESSENCE OF RELIGION

BEFORE we enter into the consideration of the various historical religions, we must make clear answer to the question: What are we to understand by religion generally? The simplest answer to this question was contained in the etymological explanation given by the church-father Lactantius: "*Religion is the attachment to God by the bond of piety.*" This definition is entirely correct, but it requires explication in order to demonstrate its general applicability.

As is well known, there are some religions which do not believe in one God, but in a plurality of gods or spirits, or even in some vague but divine something, such as the power of fate and the like. In order to make our definition hold good for these religions, we will be compelled to take the conception "god" in a general sense; something like this: That to which the religious man feels himself bound is a supernatural, world-governing power. True, to this, there immediately does appear the objection that the gods of the lower religions do not govern

## Religion and Historic Faiths

the "world," that the savage does not even have this latter conception. The conception "world," in our sense of universe, does presuppose a trained understanding, such as we are not able to accept as present at the beginnings of mankind. Nevertheless, it remains correct that even the savage believes "his world," that is the sum of the objects of his experience, to be bound to his god as the ruling power. Deity everywhere is the power which unites the manifold experience of each separate existence, the individual to his social group and his nature-environment into a whole, and somehow ordering this whole, governs it.

Toward this superior power man first has the feeling of powerlessness and dependence; he knows that his weal and woe depend upon it. Naturally, he feels the woe more keenly and in so far it was not entirely incorrect, when it was said: "Fear created the gods in the beginning." But that is not the whole truth; man has thought the possessions which he had or hoped for to be dependent on the divine power as well as the evils which he feared, and, therefore, he felt himself bound to it not only by fear but also by gratitude and confidence. Goethe has emphasized this side of religious feeling particularly in his beautiful words:

"In our bosom's pure, we struggle ever  
To yield ourselves of our own free will,  
In gratitude to a higher, purer, unknown—  
We call it being pious."

## The Essence of Religion

A being, to whom I can yield myself in gratitude, is not only an object of fear, but also of confidence. Therewith, mere fear becomes reverence and the simple feeling of dependence rises to an obligation to obedience, to voluntary subordination and surrender. Toward greater human beings, before whose power we bow and upon whose friendly attitude we depend, we have respect and a sense of duty. But toward men this feeling of attachment is always conditioned, because, despite all superiority, they stand on a level with us in the matter of human limitation and imperfection. It is different with the divine power, which governs our entire universe: it stands in unmeasurable superiority beyond us and all who are like us; with regard to it, we feel ourselves to be absolutely dependent, in duty bound to absolute subordination, attached to it with all our being and our will. In so far Schleiermacher was right in his characterization of religious feeling as that of "absolute dependence."

This definition, however, may easily lead to misunderstanding, as though religion consisted of an unfree, slavish dependence, which excluded any and all freedom. Such is not at all the case. In the statement that we feel ourselves *in duty bound* to subordinate ourselves to the divine power, there is contained the declaration that that subordination is a free act of our will, not a fate which we suffer passively, but an activity on our part, which is

## Religion and Historic Faiths

demanded of us. A necessity which is not free rules only in nature, her laws act automatically; but in man, the law of the whole becomes a demand upon the will, obedience to which is not compelled, but which only can and should be performed voluntarily. Schiller has put this difference aptly in his well-known distich:

"Seek'st thou the highest, the greatest? The plant can thy teacher be:

What, lacking will, it is, be thou with will; that 'tis."

This attachment to God through the will is the piety, the faith, which the Apostle Paul has designated as an "obedience of the heart." Furthermore, man is not afraid that, by this free obedience or surrender to God, he will lose his human freedom and dignity; but, on the contrary, he is confident that, in the alliance with God, he will achieve freedom from the limitations and fetters of surrounding nature, and those worse limitations and fetters of nature within us. The manifold desires and fears of the natural man constitute his slavery, making him unfree and unhappy; in that, the Bible agrees with the wise men of all ages—let me remind you of the Stoics and of Spinoza. The elevation above nature to God, the surrender of personal will to the divine will in obedience and confidence leads to freedom from the miserable bondage to, and degradation under, nature. Seneca said, at his early day: "To obey God is to be free."

True, as to what this release means, or what the

## The Essence of Religion

content of that happiness is which the pious man seeks with, and hopes for, from God, there have been widely differing notions, each on a level with the spiritual and moral plane of development of men. From the pleading of primitive peoples that their gods should help to defeat their enemies or bring rain or fruitfulness to their fields up to the prayer of the pious Psalmist: "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me!"—there is certainly a long road whose stations we will pass in our journey through the history of the religions. Despite differences of content, of purposes, of religious striving, this much remains unchanged: man seeks freedom from the limitations of the world and from the unrest of his own heart in the alliance with God.

You know that beautiful saying of Augustine in his Confessions: "Thou hast created us for Thyself, therefore, our hearts are restless until they find rest in Thee." The theme of the entire history of religion might be found in that sentence—the driving-force and the law of its development from the naïve beginnings of primitive religion up to the highest height of a religion of the spirit. Note well: in order to understand a development either of the natural or the spiritual life, according to its innermost meaning and principle, the lowest forms must not be taken as the standard of measure and made the explanatory reason of the whole; but just the reverse, in the highest, that which appears last,

## Religion and Historic Faiths

the key must be sought which will explain the whole, even its crudest beginnings. By the acorn one cannot recognize what kind of an oak will grow; not until the tree is full-grown is it disclosed. The new-born child gives no knowledge of the nature of the future man,—it does not become known until the man has reached maturity. Thus, too, concerning the essence of a religion, one must not judge by its lowest beginnings but by its later heights; then, for the first time, the deeper meaning, hidden in the beginning as the unconscious instinct in the childish play, is uncovered and revealed.

It is a pity that this is overlooked so often to-day; we would be spared the curious naturalistic theories of some scholars who are industriously engaged in ferreting out the crude beginnings of religions, but who seem to have no sense of what is really essential in them. As a type of all such, I take Feuerbach, the best-known and, in his way, the cleverest representative of that one-sided tendency which has contributed so much toward discrediting religious-historical studies and causing many friends of religion to regard them with suspicion.

From the undeniable fact, that in the lower stages of religion, the fulfillment of wishes, mainly sensual and selfish, is sought for by prayers and sacrifices, Feuerbach drew the conclusion that religion altogether was nothing more than a product of the selfish heart and the dreaming fancy; the gods, were "wishing-beings," whom man invented to

## The Essence of Religion

deceive himself as to his own weakness. If that be true, how explain the riddle that a simple deception persisted among all peoples during thousands of years? And that a construction of unreason, of the diseased egoistic heart, has proved to be the most effective means of conquering natural egoism, of basing and upholding reasonable customs, order and culture, in short, has proved to be the principal means of moral education of humanity, as the history of religion indisputably teaches? If it be true here, too, that "by their fruits ye shall know them," then by their reasonable effects we may draw the justified conclusion that according to its innermost essence (naturally not according to its constantly imperfect forms of manifestation) religion is not an illusion or deception, but highest truth,—and its origin is not to be found in the unreason of the selfish heart, but must be sought in reason itself, the divine tendency of our race, which contains our capacity and destiny to rise above and beyond nature.

From the time of Plato and Aristotle, all earnest thinkers have agreed that the idea of God belongs of necessity to our reason. We differentiate two modes of the activity of the reason. As cognitive (theoretical) reason, it strives to achieve a harmonious order of all of our ideas by tracing all particular being and becoming back to one all-encompassing uniform cause. This uniform, harmonious order and combination of all the varied



## Religion and Historic Faiths

phenomena is the idea of *truth*, the climax of theoretical reason, which is at the bottom of all of its will to know. Thereupon, reason looks to the desire-activities of our soul and seeks to establish order and harmony there, also, by classing all objects or purposes of the will according to their relative values, according as each is not only purpose of the individual for the moment, but for all and for all time; and here, too, reason, striving for unity, does not rest content until all particular purposes are subordinated to one highest, absolutely valuable purpose, which is the idea of the *good*, that which ought to be, the climax of practical reason, which all reasonable willing and striving looks forward to as its highest goal or ideal. Will it be possible for reason to rest satisfied definitely with this dualism of highest ideas, the idea of the true and the idea of the good?

Let us remember well that the one does not coincide absolutely with the other; on the contrary, in the world of phenomena, both always form a more or less distinct contradiction: the ideal of what ought to be is never one with what actually is, but, to a certain extent, always bears the relation of opposition and negation to present reality. So it seems that practical reason, whose guiding star is the ideal of the good, stands in irreconcilable conflict with theoretical reason, which is occupied with the truth of being. Yet it is one and the same reason which seeks to bring about a perfect unity

## The Essence of Religion

and harmony of our whole spiritual life. Will it be possible for that one reason to rest finally with a conflict and a dualism of the idea of the true and the idea of the good? Some have thought reason ought to rest content thus, because a resolution of this contradiction into a higher unity will not be capable of proof. Certainly, in the world of the manifold and of the becoming, of space and of time, the highest unity will never be found, the contradiction of is and ought will never disappear completely. For that very cause, if reason does not wish to give itself up, it cannot do other than elevate itself above the world to a last and highest unity, in which all contradictions, even that of the true and the good, are unified,—to *God*.

Yes, God is the word which solves all world-riddles, even the most difficult, which lies in that contradiction of is and ought; in the idea of God, reason striving for unity finds its ultimate object, in which alone it can be at rest, which from the beginning hovered before it always, as the impelling motive and regulative of all of its interpretative purpose—determining thinking,—actually the alpha and omega, the presupposition and the goal of all of its thoughts. But, because the idea of God is the presupposition of the truth of *all* of our thinking,—the basis of the connection of our *whole* world-picture,—therefore, the truth of this idea can not itself be demonstrated by any single series of thoughts, and can not be laid bare as a single

## Religion and Historic Faiths

member in the connection of our world-picture; to expect or to demand that would simply be self-contradiction. In so far, it is true, it does remain true that God is the object of our belief and not an object of demonstrable knowledge by reasoned proofs.

This belief, however, is not an arbitrary hypothesis,—taken on the simple basis of some outside authority or even by denial of reason,—but, on the contrary, the belief in God is the revelation of the innermost nature of reason absolute, of its divine necessity superior to all arbitrariness, or, in other words, the revelation of God within the human spirit. Naturally, this “revelation” does not relieve man of self-activity; it does not come to him as a finished gift, but as a duty, as an irresistible impulse to rise above all finite contradictions to the Supreme unity, which is the cause of all that is and the goal of all that ought to be. (Rom. xi, 36. “For of him, and through him, and to him, *are* all things.”) It is the necessity of the task which guarantees that, to some extent, it is solvable; if it be a divine impulse of the spirit which urges us to seek God, then it is a divine power of the spirit which will enable us to find him—find him so far at least as it is possible for children of Time to grasp the eternal Spirit; ever more and more closely, ever shrouded in a symbol, ever in the reflected-picture of the finite, ever in some dark riddle of a mysterious secret.

## The Essence of Religion

But however inapt our words, however inadequate our conceptions of God are and may remain, the truth of the belief in God itself is in nowise shaken, resting as it does on the "demonstration of the Spirit and of power" (1 Cor. ii, 4.). The belief in God gives our reason the guarantee of its own truth and at the same time of all other thinking and knowing in the world; it gives to our conscience the firm support of our feeling of duty; it gives to our will the courage to hope and to our action the power of accomplishment. "What the reason of the reasonable cannot see, a childlike spirit does in its simplicity." It is certainly the most difficult task of human life to find the compromise between freedom and necessity, between the world's harsh reality and the ideal of an aspiring heart. What helps man to perform that task at least acceptably is the belief in God, in which that contradiction finds eternal solution, because He is the cause of all being and, at the same time, the accomplishment of all that ought to be.

So the belief in God proves its truth by helping man to the recognition of his destiny in the world and to the fulfillment thereof. But it not only helps to solve problems, it is itself—being the highest synthesis, the unity of the deepest contradictions—the deepest problem offered to man, with which he has struggled through thousands of years of history and will have to struggle in the future. It is determined of God "that they should seek the

## Religion and Historic Faiths

Lord if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he is not far from each one of us. For in him we live, and move, and have our being. . . ." (Acts xvii, 27, 28.)

The subject of the entire history of religion is given in these words of Paul; it is a perpetual *seeking* after God, an ever-renewed effort to feel him and to find him, the unfathomable, who is so near to us, the intangible, who does encompass us all as our life-element. It is to be expected that in these attempts to feel and to find the highest unity, the balance would be now on one side and now on the other of the two contradictions unified in God; and a glance at the main forms of the historical religions confirms our expectations. Two groups they form: the one group seeks God in the world, as the cause of all being, as the reality behind all phenomena, as the law of necessity; the other group thinks of God as the ideal of freedom, as the supermundane will of the good, as the master and director of history through which he will realize his purpose. The former are religions of immanence (God in the world) or of pantheism, relatively polytheism; the latter are religions of transcendence (God beyond the world) or of monotheism. Each of these ideas of God has a mood of piety corresponding to it; in the former, quiet contemplation preponderates, a feeling either of joy or of resigned submission to the present condition of things ordered by God; while in the

## The Essence of Religion

latter, active striving preponderates, the struggle against the world for God and the hope of a future actualization of the divine good.

Not to anticipate too much the historical presentation which follows, I will limit myself to a few brief suggestions. The classic representatives of the first kind of religions (they might be termed the esthetic-contemplative group) were the Indians and the Greeks. Both began with a childlike, joyous nature-religion, which worshipped the workings of the gods in the phenomena of nature and in the arrangements of social life, and regarded the divine only as so far above reality as they saw the esthetically exalted joy of life and beauty of the world in the gods. Gradually the many nature-gods became less distinct; contemplative thinking began to consider them as the varied manifestations of the one divine being, which, as the world-soul or Brahma, is the permanent basis behind the gay round of phenomena, finally became the all-one, true being,—in contrast to which the world of the many and the changeable sinks into a mere unsubstantial semblance. When man is aware of the semblance, when he grows conscious of his unity with the all-one, he is free of the joys and sorrows of the world and, in the silent rest of abnegation, he enjoys the highest inner happiness of peace, which, removed from the changes of time, is superior to fears and hopes. A contemplative piety this, which may well satisfy the world-weary spirit, but never gives cour-

## Religion and Historic Faiths

age or strength. It was so, too, with the Greeks, when Homer's beautiful world of gods was lost in the pantheism of the Eleatic and Heraclitean philosophy and Orphic mysticism. There, too, the world becomes vain semblance or a purposeless circle of phenomena, a senseless child's-play from which, non-participating and hopeless, the wise man withdraws.

And now, with that group, contrast the religion of struggle and hope, conscious of its purpose; the classic representatives in ancient times were the Iranian prophet Zarathustra and the prophets of Israel. Here, God is the supermundane ideal of the good, the self-glorious will, which does not evanesce in the world but thrones above it as its Creator and Lord; at this time the struggle for lordship still continues against the inimical powers of reality, and only through this struggle, wherein man is in duty bound to fight on the side of God, will His rule be triumphant in the future and the realm of the good be brought into being. How far removed from the childlike, joyous optimism of nature-religion are these prophets! But how far, too, from the life-weary resignation of pantheism! Their piety consists in a wrathful and condemnatory opposition to wicked reality and in a battle for God's good cause against the false nature-gods and against the unrighteousness of men. An energetic piety it is which looks upon the earth as a field of battle, upon man as a fellow-soldier for God and upon the world's

## The Essence of Religion

history as the path to the world-judgment and the government of God; but, naturally, it is not free from the one-sidedness and the warmth of men of will and militant nature.

'And now, how about Christianity? It stands above the contradiction because it sought to combine both sides into a unity from the beginning—the immanence and the transcendence of God, the salvation of man that is and that ought to be, the mood of combat and of hope, and that of peace and of joy in the present inner possession of the highest good. On the one hand, it says, "Thy Kingdom come" (and "perish the earth," the oldest Christians added in their pessimistic view of the world). On the other hand, there was a conviction, present from the beginning, that the Kingdom of God is now here, internally, within us, in the form of the righteousness, joy and peace accomplished by the divine spirit in the heart. (Rom. xiv, 17. Luke xvii, 21). Here, God is the supermundane Lord, who guides history toward the purpose of his coming Kingdom and who will destroy his enemies all on the great day of judgment; while there, Christian faith in salvation holds the union and reconciliation of the human and the divine to be a completed fact in the humanization of the Son of God and as a permanent presence existing through the indwelling of the divine spirit in the hearts of God's children and in the congregation of the faithful, whom he consecrated as the temple of God. Accordingly,



## Religion and Historic Faiths

the pious mood is a constant intermingling of, or oscillation between, the feeling of peace and joy in the consciousness of salvation and alliance with God and the unstilled longing and hope for the future appearance and completion of the freedom and glory of the children of God. Thus Christianity seeks to unite into a unity in itself the opposing forms of earlier religions; therein lies its great superiority of abundance and strength of religious truth, but, also, its greater difficulty of mediating between these varied moments bound up in the nature of its principles into a unity theoretically and practically perfect. It is this mediation which is the task of its historical development, in the course of which these opposites, even though it is not with their former exclusiveness, always do make their presence noticeable to some degree. Its history is for that reason so much richer, as its nature is more complicated than in any other religion; it has its contemplative thinkers, its world-weary mystics, its prophets of an ideal future and its battling heroes and men of world-governing energy—each single character is fundamentally different from the others, and yet *all* are Christians, united by the common spirit of the religion of “God-humanity.” overruling all individual characteristics. I cannot enter into more detail of the history of Christianity at this point; yet I would show by the modern example of the classical thinkers and poets how the opposite funda-

## The Essence of Religion

mental tendencies, winding through the history of religion, may be recognized even in world-views which are not directly influenced by the Christian church,—there, because they are grounded in human nature itself. I am thinking of Spinoza and Goethe on the one side, and of Kant and Schiller on the other.

In Spinoza, the Indian and the Greek pantheism had a rebirth. For him, God is one with nature, the all-one being, which is at the basis of all phenomena, binding them all by the iron law of necessity. In the circle of law-abiding occurrences, there are only causes, no purposes; these latter are merely the poetic addition of human imagination. Man, too, in so far as he is fettered in the slavery of the passions, is subject to the rigid mechanism of the laws of nature; but he becomes free from this miserable condition when he recognizes the unreasonableness of his passions and regards all external events in the light of eternity, that is, as fleeting phenomena in the moving All which obeys the eternal laws. To give up one's own small self in thoughtful viewing of the divine All and to bow in peaceful submission beneath the necessity of the whole, that is Spinoza's piety. This contemplative, selfless composure was what attracted Goethe to Spinoza; therein he found the wholesome medicine for his youthful, heated temperament. But Goethe transfigured the seriousness of Spinozistic thinking through esthetic joy in nature, of the ancient Greek

## Religion and Historic Faiths

manner of thinking, which saw the world filled with divine power and glory :

“What were a God, who merely shoved without,  
And on his finger whirled the world about?  
’Tis his to move the world and hold  
Himself in nature, nature himself enfold,  
So that what in him lives and moves and is,  
Not his spirit nor his strength will miss.”

The thought of an extra-worldly God and of a God-forsaken world was not acceptable to nor admitted by a poet, who, in gratitude and admiration, perceived the deed and government of God in the order of the world, in the beauty of nature, and in the inspirations of genius everywhere. No one has the right to declare this, Goethe’s way of thinking, impious ; only this is correct, that it is one-sided and does not exhaust the nature of religion. But Goethe himself was aware of that, and, therefore, the verse, quoted requires the following to complement it :

“There is a universe within us, too,  
Hence, praiseworthy what the nations do;  
The best that each one has and knows,  
He names it God, his God; bestows  
Upon Him, heaven and earth above,  
His fear and where he can, his love.”

Here God is the name for that ideal which forms the inner world of our heart, but is far superior to all external reality; it is that to which, because we acknowledge it to be the best and the most valuable - absolutely, we ascribe rulership over heaven and earth, the power to conquer the world. Therewith the justification of the motive of supermundane

## The Essence of Religion

religion and this basis in human nature is conceded, and the validity of immanent religion put back into its proper perspective, which does not exclude the fact that for Goethe himself the preponderance was with the latter.

The contrast to Spinoza is Kant, the philosopher of freedom, of the moral ideals and of the strict division of nature from spirit, world of the senses and moral law, Is and Ought. According to him, the belief in God is not to be based upon our experience of the external world, but it is only demanded by our moral reason as a presupposition for the possibility of the future realization of the highest good, in which there will be reconciled the contradiction of reason and the senses, of virtue and happiness, which are irreconcilable for us; in other words, the belief in God serves the righteous as a guarantee of the hope that virtue will partake in the future of that happiness which it deserves,—a view against which, from the presuppositions of a strict Kantian idealism, some not unjustifiable objections might be urged. Hence Schiller, Kant's great disciple, took what was permanently valuable out of his idealism, without adhering to the limitations which were present in Kant.

According to Schiller, the belief in God is not merely a demand, an assumption in the interest of men who sought compensation for virtue through happiness; rather, he warns against the "madness" which expects reward for the good by external happiness at any time; and yet there remains for

## Religion and Historic Faiths

him the belief in the ideal of the holy will, which highest thought weaves above time and space; this belief remains for him an immediate certainty, which the heart tells and without which, man would be robbed of all value. The ideal, however, should not only remain a supermundane (abstract) quantity, but it should be taken up in our will and become the inner power and joyousness of good volition and action. In this, Schiller finds the peculiarity of Christianity, in that it places free inclination in the stead of law; therein would be represented the "humanization of the sacred." Taking Kant's ideal as a starting-point, Schiller brought it down to actual human living, just as Goethe, starting from reality, elevated himself to the ideal.

These are the two tendencies which wind through the history of religion and find oneness of principle in Christianity,—which does not prevent some from placing the emphasis on the one side and others on the other, each according to his own peculiar nature. Instead of quarreling with one another about it, we ought rather to rejoice in the variety of religious characters as the living proof of the abundance of truth, of spirit, and of power, which is bound up with religion in general, and in Christianity in particular. Whoever would understand the history of religion aright, let him hold fast to the beautiful words of Goethe, "The recognition of God, wherever and however He reveals Himself, that is real blessedness on earth."

## II

### RELIGION AND ETHICS

IN the previous lecture, I have attempted to describe the essence of religion, without entering into that question which still plays so prominent a rôle in the text-books: Is religion a thing of the emotions or of the reason or of the will? In fact, that ought not to be a question any longer, since all psychologists are agreed that these three psychical functions or conditions cannot be so separated from one another that now one and now another alone is present; logically, we may differentiate them, but in the real life of every day, they are never differentiated, but always in each moment of full consciousness, they are so inseparably connected and so reciprocally active, that one without the other can not be understood. That a century ago, in its passionate reaction against the shallow perspicuity and the frosty moralizing of the age of Enlightenment, Romanticism elevated the feelings as the one-and-all of religion (as of art)—historically, we can understand; but that does not permit us to withhold the judgment that it was a fatal error. For to it, must be ascribed the blame for the great and widespread

## Religion and Historic Faiths

confusion, thoughtlessness and anarchy in things religious, from which we are suffering to-day.

Emotion, everywhere, is nothing but the coming into consciousness of a stimulation of the will through an idea; accordingly as it is positive or negative, attractive or repulsive in its effect on an instinct, we become conscious of it as a feeling of an agreeable or disagreeable nature. If there can be no feeling in general without the stimulus of an idea, then it is natural that there can be no religious feeling without some kind of an idea of a corresponding object, some superhuman power, upon which man feels that he is dependent and to which he feels himself bound. Some idea of the divine is therefore the presupposition of the origin of a religious feeling. However, the mere idea of God is not religion, for religion is a matter of the whole man. One may have a mass of ideas about God, perhaps carry a whole system of church doctrines about in his head, and yet be an entirely irreligious person, and remain so as long as those ideas are merely matter of knowledge and find no echo in the will, so long as they do not release religious feelings. The presence of religious feelings is an evidence that a man does not only know about God, but that he is moved by it as to his will and follows its decisions; that he has God not only in his head, but also in his heart. "Would you have him as your own, then feel the God you think." The feelings released by the ideas do not

## Religion and Ethics

remain for themselves as conditions of rest, but they become impelling powers for the will which sets the will in motion in the direction indicated by the content of the ideas. Directly the will reacts inwardly upon the God-idea, in that it enters into a corresponding relation with God, affirms and acknowledges its attachment to the divine will, and makes its decisions accordingly, surrendering itself to Him in obedience. This movement of the will, at first inward, externalizes itself in corresponding action in "the service of God." This takes place in two-fold fashion: partly in unmediated relation to God as service of God in the narrower (cultish) sense, partly in mediate relation, through the moral action among men and things of the world which correspond with the divine will.

Naturally there can be no such thing as a direct action upon God in the strict sense of the word, hence the activities of the cult-service of God have but a symbolic meaning; they are the symbolic-representative expression of the inner tendency of the will to God, the immediate expression of the pious feelings and, at the same time, the means of stimulating, energizing and imparting those feelings. The real service of God is actually only moral activity in the world, in so far as the pious soul regards it as the fulfillment of tasks set him by God, as a service for the cause of God, for the realization of the divine purposes in the world. Yet it must be remembered that this differentiation



## Religion and Historic Faiths

of ours between actual and inactual, real and symbolic-cultish service of God, is not yet clear to the naïve religious consciousness; the latter does not think of mere symbolism in the performances of the cult-activities, but thinks that he is performing a direct service to his god thereby, that it is an agreeable and desired deed, whereby the favor of the god is won and a return deed is bought. Since this direct cult-act for the god disregards the moral purposes of society, and does not come into contact with them, or if it does, it is a mere matter of chance and of secondary import, it is well possible and happens frequently that a conflict arises between the cult-service of God and the moral purposes of society. Then, instead of being the most powerful motive of morality, religion becomes its gravest obstacle.

The ultimate source of this evil lies in the childish, senseless mode of thought of primitive religion, which, without further ado, places the relation to God on a level with the relation to a powerful man,—that is, ascribes to him a selfish will, peculiar needs and self-seeking wishes; whereas the divine will is perfectly good, so that its object is absolutely one with the general highest good. The same lowering of God to the finite is also the source of the conflicts between religious ideas and profane knowledge; for if God is conceived as an individual Being, acting alongside of others, differing from other finite beings merely in degree of power, then

## Religion and Ethics

peculiar finite activities will be ascribed to Him which collide with those of other finite causes, hence breaking through and nullifying the causal connection of the whole of the world-order; whereas, in reality, God is the infinite power and wisdom: He is the eternal basis of the reasonable order of the world and the guarantee of the knowledge of it for our thinking.

Therewith, we have arrived at the important question: What is the relation of religion to ethics and to science? This question is of utmost importance for a proper judgment of present and past religion. Therefore, we will enter more deeply into it.

*Religion and ethics*—what a much vexed subject of our day! Many there are who think that their origins were distinct, that they differed totally; that religion originally had no connection with morals, but that the latter had been something extraneous added subsequently as an accidental to the former; that, therefore, they do not belong essentially together, that they may well be able to go farther apart than they are now, and that such a separation would better serve the interest of ethics. On the other hand, there are those who are convinced that the separation not only contradicts all past history but also their own nature, and that it would be productive of the gravest disaster to both. At the outset, let us test these two opposing opinions in the light of the facts offered by history.

## Religion and Historic Faiths

On one point there can be not the slightest doubt; the notion that religion and ethics were originally entirely separate and distinct is false,—an almost inconceivable error. Among the serious research-students working over ancient periods, it is generally conceded, to-day, that the moral conduct of men had its beginning in the religious faith and religious rites. The feeling of allegiance to the one common deity of a certain social group was the original tie of all moral solidarity and community, that was the source of social order and morality of mankind. The sanctity of the family emanated from the cult-service. The hearth was the home-altar, the house-father was the priest, who acted for the family in performing the service to the household-deity. In the tribe that was the position of the oldest or the tribe-chief; with a nation it was the national king. They were the representatives of the divinely-founded unity of the tribe or nation, the mouthpieces of the divine will, and the mediators between the god and men; hence, even Homer calls them “Zeus-born.” So, too, all legal procedure in the world of the ancient peoples was sanctified by religion; everywhere the written and the unwritten law was traced back to divine establishment and revelation.

Not only the law of Moses, but among the Indians, the law of Manu, among the Persians, that of Zarathustra, among the Greeks, that of Lycurgus, among the Romans, that of Numa—all of them

## Religion and Ethics

were looked upon as divinely given and sanctioned by divine oracles. Here, as everywhere, the highest source of human authority and order is deity itself. Because the god founded and established all rights and laws, it was logically concluded that the god was the protector of all rights and the avenger of all injustice. From of old, this thought has been effective as a mighty educational power among men. The human judge performs his offices as a commission of the god judging, and where his power proves to be too weak it is supplemented by the divine Nemesis and Dike and the Erinnyes, the fearful daughters of Night. All turning-points in the life of the individual and the political community were also sanctified by religion in the beginning. Thus, at the birth of a child, it was placed under the protecting care of the household-deity with solemn ceremony; the attainment of majority, the marriage, the entombment,—they are celebrated by festal rites established by the god. And then, the best and most precious things which the awakening spirit of man brought forth, his arts, were the children of religion; they erected the wondrous structure of the temple for the gods, they decorated its halls with noble statuary and precious dedicatory gifts. The lively antiphonal songs and circle-dancing at the vintage-feast of Dionysus gave rise to the classic drama, the overwhelming tragedies, and the witty comedies of the Greeks.

. But no less the earnest business and events in the

## Religion and Historic Faiths

political life of the people, the council and judicial meetings, the departure for war, the founding of colonies—all of this, too, eventuated according to the oracular speech of the god and in trust of his protection. The returning army, victorious, dedicated its trophies as a tribute of thanks to the god. So the whole life of the individual and of the nation was encompassed and permeated, ordered and regulated, elevated and sanctified by their religion. It was not, as it is with us, a thing apart for itself; it was the soul of the social life, the bond of political community, the impulse to self-sacrificing patriotism, the education to a higher culture, the sanctification and the crown of life. There was not as yet any distinction between church and state; the temporal and the religious life of the people was an undivided unity, regulated by the same laws and serving the same purposes: the honor of the national god who was wrapped up in the perpetuation and best welfare of the whole nation.

Naturally, it could not remain so long. It is a peculiarity of religion that it keeps a tight hold on traditional ideas and ceremonies with great tenacity. That is its strength, for thereby, the fleeting and changeable life of the children of men gains hold, permanence and firmness. But that which is in truth its strength is at the same time its weakness. For the forward and upward striving human spirit cannot possibly remain fettered by the leading-strings of traditions and commandments. When

## Religion and Ethics

man opens his eyes and looks about him in the world, he finds that there are many things quite different from what he had been led to think by the pious traditions of his fathers handed down from generation to generation. The work of culture in society becomes more complicated, the activity of the individual becomes more independent and more intensive, and so both break loose from the fixed traditional forms of religion. No longer is the custom and the faith of the parent, but man's own opinion and his wish as an individual, is declared to be the measure of all things. At first, this is rather a loss than a gain, but it is a necessary step on the pathway of the evolution of the human spirit, as in the period of the Sophists, and again in the modern age of Enlightenment (even as early as the Renaissance). With this release of the thinking and the willing of the individual from the traditional faith and custom, religion and morality enter into that opposition to one another which leads to struggle. We cannot take up each of the phases of that combat in detail; we are still in the midst of the fray and there is no sign to tell us when it will end.

Some think that the combat could soon be brought to a close if every one would only recognize that the two had nothing to do with one another; on Sundays, religion might have its say for a brief hour, but beyond that ethics and science go their own way, heedless of religion. Yes, there are some

## Religion and Historic Faiths

who go further and maintain that morals will not improve until ethics has freed itself completely from religion, for the influence exerted by religion upon morals is bad. Religion, so these men say, makes man unfree, in that it subordinates man to the strange will of God, robs man of his own free self-determination upon which all moral dignity rests. By the employment of the motives of fear and hope in the insistence upon its commandments, religion degrades morals and makes them unclean, for action, which has regard for reward and punishment, is a pseudo-morality.

Furthermore, instead of urging man to depend upon his own moral power and effort, religion refers him to divine grace and providence, which will do all things for him; religion even denies freedom to man and his power for good, and thus paralyzes all his energies, making him discouraged and indolent, cowardly and unfit for the struggle for existence. The more so since religion ever points to a realm beyond, and represents this earthly existence as vain and valueless, as a valley of sorrows which is not worth the concern of men; thus, religion embitters earthly toil for men and turns them against their immediate tasks and duties, making them unfit inhabitants of the earth. Finally, as a church, religion has fixed its ordinances, in which it has set down what shall be true and good forever; therewith man is prevented from striving for knowledge of the truth, from the exercise of

## Religion and Ethics

independent testing and judging, from the attainment of a firm personal conviction,—killing man's sense of truth, making him either deceitful or ignorant; and while one church reviles the other, religion fomented the worst of discord, all misfortunes and evils which the nations are suffering.

What shall we say to all of this? First of all, I think we will take heed not to answer the uncalled-for exaggerations of our opponents with like exaggeration. We do not wish to maintain that, among those estranged from religion or who think they are estranged from it, there are not moral men; that would be a contradiction of experience. It cannot be denied that even among those who are not associated with any positive religion there are moral characters deserving of high respect,—men distinguished by their conscientiousness, their industry in their calling, and their eagerness for the public welfare. But whence have these men obtained their moral principles and their moral attitude? Are they not the fruits of an education which from youth impressed the good as the absolutely valuable upon them and caused them to love it, wakened their sense of duty and molded their consciences? This education was given to them by the moral community in which they grew up, and the moral spirit which pervaded it rested upon its religious world-view. In the consciousness of single individuals, this close interweaving of the moral and religious convictions may be somewhat dark-



## Religion and Historic Faiths

ened, nevertheless it remains an indisputable fact that the common moral consciousness of human society rests on its religious beliefs, standing and falling with them. There is no disputing the lessons taught by the experience of history; in ages of religious decadence, of faithlessness and skepticism, the moral consciousness of a nation usually sinks and degenerates into confusion and disintegration. How could it be otherwise? Where else could the moral consciousness acquire the faith in the absoluteness of duty and the sanctity of the moral ideal, if not from the faith in an absolute eternal will of the good superior to the arbitrariness of men, that is from God? Only in a consciousness of the allegiance to the divine will, which is the common cause as it is the common law and goal of the lives of men, can men feel themselves bound one to the other by the irrefragible moral bond of mutual obligation. Therefore, everywhere it is the religious belief of peoples in which the stoutest roots of the consciousness of duty are imbedded; the religious belief supports the consciousness of the individual and the community and keeps it alive, and it gives perpetual guarantee of the subordination of the individual members to the order of the whole and their willing surrender to the purpose of the whole.

How about those charges brought against religion in regard to its influence upon morals? As a preliminary, it must be said that the essential differ-

## Religion and Ethics

ence between religion itself and its positive church forms, doctrines, ordinances and customs, is overlooked. We ought to be permitted to take it for granted that any one who talks about these matters knows that these things are not religion, but merely its imperfect presentation-forms, coverings and shells (Kant, "vehicles"), which are conditioned by time and changeable in time. And no less ought we to presuppose a knowledge of the fact concerning the law of evolution, under which we are accustomed to consider all physical and historical life to-day, namely, that it holds good in religion as well as in morals. Both of them were given at the beginning not as completed entities, but were compelled to work their way out of crude beginnings gradually, to rise from attachment to the senses to freedom of the spirit. Through arduous effort and education of generation after generation, reason must gradually be brought to consciousness in men and finally to mastery over them. In this educative process to reasonableness the race, as well as the individual, must pass through certain different stages, and every educator knows that the same demands cannot be made in the lower stages as in the higher. In the child-stage of development, the good cannot be known by a reasoned judgment, and cannot be desired nor done through a voluntary self-determination, but to each one there comes an external command which demands the subordination of the personal will under

## Religion and Historic Faiths

the commanding will. It is perfectly natural that this stage of development corresponds to the theocratic form of religion and morals, that is, the idea that the good is a command to men from a strange and external will of God, the supermundane Lord. In this form of religious consciousness, man does bear a relation to God which is as unfree as that of a slave to his master, or of a minor child to its tutor. Just as this form of consciousness in the lower stage of development is inevitable, so little should it remain permanent. When the time was ripe, the discipline of the law was removed and mankind called to freedom as the full-grown sons of God. That was the new consciousness of God's children brought by Christianity. Paul says:

"Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage." (Gal. v, 1).

But this freedom of Christians is not equivalent to license; it stands just as far above the heathen lack of law and unbridled freedom as it does above Jewish legality and unfreedom. It is the freedom in God, in allegiance of conscience to Him, which makes free from the compulsion of the world and does at the same time unite man to men in love; as Luther says of "the freedom of Christian men," that they are master of all things in faith and servant of all in love. That, too, is the fundamental thought of the classical philosophy of idealism,

## Religion and Ethics

which Schiller has expressed in the well-known verse:

Absorb the divine into your will,  
From its world-throne, 'twill descend,  
Of itself the yawning chasm will fill  
The fearful object 'take an end.  
The strong links of the law can bind  
The slavish sense disdaining them, alone,  
With the opposition of men vanishes  
Too, the majesty of God.

Therewith the reproach of impure motives attributed to religious morals is also removed. In the condition of immaturity, when the good still appears as the external command of a strange will, the motives of fear and hope are naturally indispensable. But in the measure with which man grows out of the condition of immaturity and lifts himself to the state of childship of God, those motives lose their meaning; in their stead enters the joyous surrender to the good as God's purpose, which is at the same time our own reasonable purpose of life, and there enters the reasonable service of God, which is, at the same time, the service of men in unselfish love.

Concerning the further effects of the belief in providence, does it actually make men indolent? Experience hardly confirms it as a fact. The truly pious belief in providence was ever a prop for morally striving and struggling men, and a prop with which it would be difficult to dispense. How could man endure in the struggle and effort for the good if he did not believe that his goal was attain-

## Religion and Historic Faiths

able, if he dared not hope for the future victory of the right over wrong, of love over selfishness, of truth over falsehood? But how can man cherish such hopes if he builds solely upon his own weak powers, and regards only external experience, in which so often evil triumphs over good? When man believes in God as the Lord of the world and the director of the world's course, then he knows of a surety that all things in the world must serve the purposes of God and must coöperate toward the victory of the good. For the truly pious, the grace of God is anything but a pillow of idleness for moral sloth. Consider the great heroes of the history of religion: a Paul, a Luther, a Calvin, a Knox—were they idle men or were they not rather most powerful heroes of active work? It was not so despite the fact, but because they felt themselves to be instruments of divine grace, driven and borne by the divine spirit, whose power they knew to be strong in their weakness.

The hope of a world beyond, the world-weariness, the longing for heaven,—must they not paralyze all moral activity? Well, yes, that did appear at times, for example, at the close of the ancient world and again in the medieval world like some epidemic of disease, and it is to be judged in the same fashion as that sentimental world-woe which attacks some people in their youthful stages of development. But such conditions are diseases of youth, which have their time and then pass off. So, too, the

## Religion and Ethics

Christian believers did not rest at the stage of world-denial, but conquered it by the inner force of their faith. We pray: "Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth, as it is in Heaven." We hope for its coming upon this, our earth; we hope that this scene of our sorrows and joys, our labor and toil, will become consecrated to a realm of the good, where right will become might, and peace embrace justice.

Naturally, even with this hope, there remains an excess of the other-worldliness of the ideal, which can never be absorbed completely by the world of our experience here below. That lies in the nature of the matter, in the nature of the ideal, and in the need of the human spirit. We cannot hide from our sight the fact that despite all our labor and our striving the ultimate goal is something that we can never reach. "So long as man strives, he errs." The ideal constantly recedes before him, vanishing ever into higher and greater distance. And yet there is a sanctuary of refuge, where we can partake of the eternal as something present,—it is pious devotion, whether it be in the quiet of our own chamber or in the common service with the whole congregation. There we rise somewhat to the viewpoint of God and look upon things of time under the aspect of eternity. There that which will be, now is; the chasm between what is and what ought to be, which never can or should disappear for those striving after morality, is bridged by the feeling of

## Religion and Historic Faiths

eternity in worship. With the eye of God, we look upon life which is ever becoming and striving and ever imperfect, and we see its great gaps filled and see its battles ended, we see the ideal as an inner vision and feel it as a living presence. In such wise, religion is not only the firm root of the power of the moral, but also its crown and its completion; the myriad bits of earth it gathers up into a complete entity; it lifts us out of the sorrows and the struggles of time to eternity.

### III

#### RELIGION AND SCIENCE

VEXED as is the problem of the relation of ethics to religion of which we spoke in the last lecture more so is the problem of the relation of religion to science. In order to have a clear idea wherein the cause of the various conflicts between religion and science lies, and whether a solution may be hoped for, we must first see how that originates which in religion forms the teachable matter of tradition, the content of the ideas of faith. At the outset, religion, as the psychical determination of life of the whole man, must be differentiated from the doctrines of religion as content of knowledge. That the latter does form a part of religion is a conclusion which follows from what was said in the last lecture concerning the necessary coincidence of ideas with feelings and activities of the will in religion; for the very reason that the religious idea is an essential moment, but only one moment, in the whole of the religious life of the soul, there has also been said that the religious idea and doctrine must not be substituted for religion itself. Religious ideas may be subjected to the most thorough-



## Religion and Historic Faiths

going changes, and yet religion may remain essentially the fundamental of the soul. From which, it follows, that conflicts between profane knowledge and the traditional religious ideas raise no question of the right of religion itself, but they are merely indications that the former mode of thought is no longer the adequate form for the religious life and therefore stands in need of more or less emendation or renovation.

Science forms the things it knows by means of the thinking of reason; the more objective and sober the grasp of a subject by the thinker, the less play he grants to his subjective prejudices, tendencies and moods, the more nearly he will approach to the truth. In religion, however, at first not at all, and later merely in part and with conditions, does reason shape the doctrine; but, from the beginning, it is the poetic fancy in which the elements of a doctrine, the religious myths, legends and sayings, have their origin.

This difference in origins is naturally the source of a very great difference between the doctrines of religion and science. Religious fantasy never makes its poetry voluntarily, as is the case with the poet, who does his work with conscious art. The original legends are rather the products of the unconscious poetic activity of the popular spirit; they arise from the conflux of the pictures present in the souls of the many; one cannot say where or how. Neither does the religious fantasy draw its poetry

## Religion and Science

from nowhere, but rather attaches it to actual experiences, to phenomena of nature and the events of history, to such experiences as released similar religious feelings in the souls of the many. Examples? Above all, there is that universal poem of the fantasy, which is still found in our day wherever there are children or primitive peoples, that ascribing of a soul to all the things of nature which we usually term "animism." Of itself, animism is not religion, but is its foundation; one might call it the most elementary popular metaphysics. Naturally, among the phenomena of nature, those must have been the most impressive in every age which were of most incisive importance for the preservation of life, such as the dying of the nature world in the autumn and its reawakening in the spring. Since fantasy saw living souls, spirits and gods everywhere present in nature, this death and resurrection of nature must have been the fate of the deities whose souls dwelt therein.

But it is the way of the poetizing fantasy that an event which is constantly occurring or ever-recurring, is summed up in one story of the past. Thus, the primitive myths of the death and resurrection of the gods of nature and of fruitfulness—Osiris, 'Adonis, 'Attis, Dionysos, Persephone and the like,—had their beginning. Out of such a carrying-back of a continually returning event in nature into a one-time story of the past, the Babylonian myth of Creation originated, which is closely related to that

## Religion and Historic Faiths

of the Bible as we shall see more in detail later; a spring song, in which the annual victory of the sun-god over the powers of Chaos was celebrated, served the fantasy of a seer or priest as a model for the poetic presentation of the original emergence of an ordered universe out of the chaos of the first beginning. It is likely that the Flood-myth originated in such wise also, the frequently recurring floods of Mesopotamia being consolidated in one epic of a one-time catastrophe of the early days of the world. Soon other questions force themselves upon the attention of men: Whence comes all the evil of the world? Whence all the sicknesses and cares of human life? Why must women bear with pain, and men labor in the sweat of their foreheads? The answer to these questions reads: The blame for all of this rests upon the curiosity of woman and the weakness of man—Eve and Adam, Pandora and Epimetheus-Prometheus.

Out of these early sagas of nature myths and the recollections of historic experiences of primitive tribes, there arise then the epics or songs of heroes, in which the oldest form of historical tradition is to be seen. When the single tribes unite into one people, their tribal deities combine into a national system of gods, in which the individual gods are genealogically combined, differentiated according to rank and occupation, and subordinated to one supreme national god, whereas the local gods and the gods of the smaller tribes are lowered to the

## Religion and Science

rank of demi-gods or human heroes of the early days. The epic heroes are the divine ancestors, to whom the tribes and families trace back their origin, and whose deeds and fates partly mirror the historical memories of the tribes. Here is where the cult-myths belong in which priestly families trace back the history of their sanctuary to a divine establishment and revelation; such are the Python-Apollo myth of Delphi, the Demeter-Kore myth of Eleusis, the Hebrew myths of the appearance of God at Hebron, Bethel and the like. An important epoch in the history of culture, the transition from human to animal sacrifices, is described in the stories which tell of non-fulfillment by divine intervention, in the instances of Isaac and Iphigenia.

Most important, however, are the legends which attach themselves to the epoch-making personalities of the history of religions, the prophets and reformers, the so-called founders of religions. Because the words from them were looked upon as the truth by the congregation, faith made of these men messengers, mediators and even incarnations of the god. Their biographies are adorned with wonder-tales, the symbols of the truth of direct inspiration by revelation, as in the cases of Moses, Zarathustra, Pythagoras, Buddha, Jesus. With the last-named, the origin of their mortal persons is soon traced back to the divine, and this divine nature soon partakes of the god, without, in any way, attempting to deny the man of the earth. For

## Religion and Historic Faiths

popular legend there lay no difficulty therein to deify the human and to humanize the divine,—for, had not that been the theme of all the epic hero-myths of previous periods. The difficulty first became apparent when the understanding approached the naïve myth with the question: How is one to think in such case, could an actual god become a man or could an actual man become a god? Christianity has been busy with this question for more than half a millenium, and in the end it has not been solved but simply set down and fixed in the contradictory form of the dogma. Dogma is therefore not, as is so often thought, the arbitrary invention of the theologian. Dogma is the attempt of the reflecting understanding to state the content of the pious legend in conceptual formula.

At all times the fundamental idea, the peculiar character of any religion, is the heart of its central dogma; the idea contained is attached to historical or legendary events and visualized through the person of the prophetic founder, who naturally undergoes idealization for that purpose. Thus, for the Persians, Zarathustra is the embodiment of his religion of struggle and the hope of a future victorious rulership of God; for the Buddhists, Gautama Buddha is the embodiment of salvation through knowledge, self-abnegation and benevolence; for the Christian, Jesus is the embodiment of the child-of-God idea, salvation from the world and

## Religion and Science

reconciliation with God in faith and love. To this central dogma, usually, there become attached doctrines concerning the beginning and the end of the world, the materials for which are found partly in ancient myths and partly in philosophical speculations. Finally, all of this is woven with great art into one complete theological doctrinal system which describes an all-encompassing picture of the world, Here and Beyond, history (legend) and metaphysics and morals; then its authoritative validity for the faith of the church is fixed and firm until a contradiction with the knowledge of progressing culture is recognized.

The opposition to ecclesiastical doctrines of faith originated with the natural sciences. In the sixteenth century, when Copernicus presented his teaching that the earth does not stand still, but, with the other planets revolves about the sun, Melancthon regarded this teaching as gross error, and demanded its suppression by the superior authorities; he recognized its contradiction of the biblical report of Creation and the biblical world-picture with all the far-reaching consequences more keenly than did the later theologians, who have learned to accept the Copernican-view of the world in the main, but close their eyes to the separate logical consequences. What Copernicus had begun, physics and mathematics continued in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries by their habit of exact logical and causal

## Religion and Historic Faiths

thinking, and thus the conviction of the invariableness of eventuation is formed. Spinoza first made this thought the basis of a philosophic view of the world, and he even drew the conclusion therefrom that miracles, in the actual sense of supernatural nature-phenomena, were not possible, because they would indicate a cessation of the order of the world, which is one with the eternal and unchangeable nature of God. Finally, the nineteenth century came with the theory of evolution, which Lamarck prepared and Darwin carried out to its victorious completion, according to which all higher species of earthly living beings, including men, developed from certain simple ground-forms through gradual and naturally-conditioned changes. But what becomes of the Biblical Paradise? of the Creation? of the perfect condition of man at the beginning? Instead of such a peaceful idyll there is put a semi-animal beginning of our race with all the horrors of the hard struggle for existence, with the slow and laborious elevation to human culture; nevertheless it is a rise from the depths of animal nature to spiritual freedom, and, in the end, that is a more sublime thought than the church-doctrine of a fall from some mythical height to an abysmal depth of depravity.

For the science of history, the thought of evolution also became important. In history, man learned to regard more closely the gradual becoming of the higher out of the lower, without any leaps or abrupt

## Religion and Science

new-beginnings; in the stead of divine miraculous deeds, there entered the natural relation of the doings of individuals under the conditioning influences of the social conditions of the time and their environment. It was recognized that the greatest heroes and innovating spirits were always children of their period and in some measure hemmed by its limitations, that everything temporal was temporally limited and relative. These principles were then applied to biblical history and led to a complete overturning of traditional views. The examination of the biblical writings after the critical method usually applied to profane writings was begun and their divergencies and partial contradictions in the separate traditions as well as in the total conception of Christianity was regarded. Whatever was human and conditioned by the history of the time in the utterances and the teachings of the biblical authors, was in all places so clear, that the faith in the infallibility and direct divine inspiration of the words of the Bible could no longer be maintained. Finally, the view widened from the biblical field to that of the whole history of religion. Here the most remarkable parallels between biblical and heathen legends soon became apparent,—parallels which partly seemed to point to a dependence of the former on the latter. For instance, the similarities existing between the biblical and the Babylon Creation and Flood stories, between the laws of Moses and those of Hammurabi, between the



## Religion and Historic Faiths

Jewish and the Persian doctrines of angels and devils, of resurrection and world-judgment, between the evangelic and the Buddhistic miracle-legends. Therewith the critical analysis of the traditional doctrines of faith, which had begun with externals (creation and world-picture), finally arrived at the central point: even the doctrines of Christ and of salvation were questioned, disrobed at least of their unique miraculous character, in place of which here, too, conditioning by time and history were substituted. So the fight between modern science and ancient doctrines of faith was taken up along the whole line; and with greatest vigor, it is still being fought. We are standing in the midst of it. How will it end? Will they prove to be in the right who see the end of religion in the victory of science? Or will the rigid defenders of the traditional faith prove right in their conviction that faith will emerge from the present crisis unharmed and unchanged? Or, will neither combatant maintain his ground?

This much is certain: Church-rulership over science to-day, or in the future, is out of the question. Such rulership was possible only as long as the Church ruled the entire spiritual life of society, and, as in the Middle Ages, an independent temporal science had not yet arisen. Later, relations were reversed; in the age of enlightenment when the human spirit became conscious of its rights and its capacity for independent thought untrammelled

## Religion and Science

by authority, then science made the bold claim to rule over religion. Emancipated reason arranged its "natural religion," made up of abstract conceptions, and whatever of historical religion did not fit into this free construction of reflection was simply thrown aside as meaningless and worthless. This was the equally-one-sided companion-piece to the religion of authority preceding, and for that reason it could not be permanent. It is clear that science, as little as art, can make religion, for both are a historically-given and self-developing life, which can no more be created than it can be destroyed by argumentation. And the purpose of religion, as of art, lies as little in the increase of our knowledge of the world; but religion seeks to put our hearts into right relation to God, and therewith to give us the right view-point for judgment of the world and of life according to its relation to our emotion and volition. For that reason the intellectualism of the age of enlightenment was mistaken. Against the enlightenment such men as Rousseau, Hamann, Herder, Schleiermacher and others rose up; this was the new tendency which is generally termed "Romanticism,"—a passionate protest against the supremacy of the understanding in favor of the rights of the heart and the fantasy, the emotions, the notions and the moods of men. According to Schleiermacher, religion is a feeling of the infinite in the finite, or a feeling of absolute dependence; each religion is equally true in so far as it is a mat-

## Religion and Historic Faiths

ter of the feelings, but with the truth of science it has nothing whatsoever to do.

It is this notion which governs in the New-romanticism of to-day. Religion and science, so men say, should stand peaceably one alongside the other and suffer each to go its way in peace, one not caring about the other. Science should confine itself to the knowledge of the causal connection of finite things and events, while religion has nothing to do with knowledge either of God or the world, but only with the experiences of the spirit, our inner life, which are completely independent of the truths of science and have their value in themselves, in the benevolent and consolatory feelings which give us an inner satisfaction irrespective of all that may be said about its "truth."

Nowadays that seems a welcome way of escape for many, an easy peace-proposition in the bitter struggle between religion and science. Pity it is, that with this division of understanding and heart, the opposition is not reduced, but simply hidden and laid over. Let us be honest and try to make clear to ourselves the actual condition of things. What does science want? Simply to know certain separate relations here and there in the different realms? Will science ever give up the attempt to move from single relations to others until it has completed a world-picture which shall embrace all? Certainly not. But, suppose science arrives at a mechanical materialism as the explanation of the world which

## Religion and Science

robs the faith in God of all meaning except such as is contained in Feuerbach's illusion theory. Can religion rest satisfied with that? Can the religious feelings maintain their value if they are directed toward an object which has been recognized as a subjective creation of illusion? In fact, there can be no doubt, all religion would then be at an end; its experiences and emotions would soon cease if the fundamental, the truth of the idea of God, were withdrawn and they were left suspended in the air, so to speak. Then religion cannot peacefully stand alongside a scientific view of the world which is atheistic; religion could not suffer it without giving itself up. But let us take another view of the matter.

The naïve mode of religious thinking prefers to attach its pious feelings to the wonder-legends and therefore, demands that, for the sake of the value of those feelings, the miracle should have the validity of truth, and science should acknowledge it to be such. Will science, for the sake of sweet peace, quietly submit to such a demand? It is well known that science refuses to do so, and regarded from the standpoint of science, justifiably so, for this demand is nothing short of a command to give up the complete lawfulness of all becoming in time and space, which is the fundamental presupposition, the *conditio sine qua non*, of all scientific thinking and knowing in the world. Science cannot yield this ground, cannot make this concession to the religious way of

## Religion and Historic Faiths

thinking, without yielding itself up. In truth, the matter stands thus: The compromise between religion and science, on the basis of a mutual ignoring and indulgence, is deceptive and untenable, however acceptable it may seem to the superficial eye. Such cheap subterfuges will not stand permanently; they are merely pillows upon which the ease-loving and lazy-thinking seek to rest, hence they are not fitting for an earnest and honest science of religion. The latter cannot thrust aside the task of seeking a positive mediation between religion and science, a relation of honest mutual recognition, respect and furtherance.

The God-idea itself is the guarantee that it must be possible to find such a relation between the two, in so far as that idea involves the unity of world-cause and world-purpose, the final of all knowing and willing. Just as that idea for morals contains the deepest foundation and perfection of duty and right volition, so for science, it contains the final ground and the finishing goal of all knowledge of the world. That is the decisive point, concerning which there must be no misunderstanding. As has been said, the presupposition of science is the un-deviating lawfulness of all the world phenomena and the steady evolution of all life in nature and history. Upon what is this presupposition of lawfulness based? On proofs of any sort? Not at all; it is the basis of all the proofs of inductive research and, therefore, cannot itself be proved. Its first

## Religion and Science

beginning is a hypothesis of faith, a postulate of reason which would know the world in logically ordered thinking and, therefore, must necessarily assume that the world is a reasonably ordered whole, a lawful connection of being and becoming. What else is involved in this assumption of faith which reason necessarily makes? If the world is a law-abiding arrangement of interacting finite forces, the question arises at once: Whence comes this order? Inasmuch as it governs the multitudinous number of finite beings and powers, or joins them into a unity or cosmos, it cannot possibly have its origin in the many and the finite; it must rather be the product of a uniform cause which the multiplicity presupposes, one prime power underlying all finite powers as the infinite source of power or omnipotence; yet, at the same time, it must be a reasonable principle, otherwise there could not possibly be a reasonable order in its activity in the single powers: hence, underlying the reasonable, ordered multiplicity, there will be an omnipotent, creative reason which is the unity, the world-principle or God. Or if, instead of starting from the object of thought, we begin with the thinking subject himself, we arrive at the same result. 'Are the logical laws of our reason invented or made by ourselves? Found, yes, that is, raised into consciousness and set in conceptual formulæ, they have been, by thinking men, by philosophers like Aristotle or Kant, men who have thought searchingly concerning human

## Religion and Historic Faiths

thinking itself; but certainly the logical laws of the human reason were not made by these thinkers, just as little as the arithmetical and geometrical laws were made by the mathematicians, or the physical laws by the physicists, who first discovered and formulated them. The laws of our thinking are not products of our thinking, but they are the pre-suppositions which alone make our thinking possible; as Kant says, they are the "previously-given" or *a priori*. Whence, then, originates this core of human thinking, common to us all and previously-given to all? A non-thinking cause would not explain it, and, therefore, there remains but the one assumption that it originates in a thinking which is presupposed by all human thinking and which is superhuman, that same creative reason of God in which the lawful order of the external world of nature, found its basis.

Concerning the thought of evolution which governs the natural and historical sciences of to-day, it must be said that it does not stand in conflict with the religious belief in God, when it becomes clear what the conception of evolution really includes. It is not merely a casually-conditioned consequence of various circumstances (as, for example, of the weather, or of the surface of the earth, or of a disintegrating organism—of these, no one uses the term "evolution"), but it is such a continuous alteration of the conditions of one's living, that is governed from the beginning by a permanent im-

## Religion and Science

pulse, striving toward the final goal of the entire process. All evolution strives to attain one goal and this, its purpose, which is one finally with the phenomenon, as Aristotle even said, is from the beginning the driving power and the governing law of the entire process. Now modern science has taught us to regard the total of life in nature, in its manifold forms and stages, as a connected and uniform evolution. Good. That only justifies us the more in asking after the purpose of this all-embracing evolution of life in nature, and of finding it in man, who is the objective-point and highest peak, being a child of nature, and yet more than nature, because he is a thinking being, a being with reason. Now we are reminded, naturally, that the beginning of humanity is not to be thought of as a sublime spirituality, but rather as a very low animal-like naturalness; that is very likely, for even to-day every child of man must commence with a similar modest beginning. But the conclusion therefrom is only this, that the natural man is not the final purpose; the evolution of life does not rest with him as such, but goes on, no longer as a process of nature, but as a historical process of culture.

But what is the purpose of the ever-to-be-sought and partially-achieved goal of historical culture? It is the development of the reason-tendency of man into a real reasoning, moral personality; it is the becoming of the spiritual man, who conquers nature, of and about himself, making it serve as a means of



## Religion and Historic Faiths

the free spirit. If the last goal of all natural and historical development is spirit, in the formal and the real sense of the word, must we not presuppose, that the cause of the entire development was spirit, creative spirit, setting and realizing its purpose? Or is it thinkable that at the end there should be found something in the result which had not been present in some fashion in the cause? Can spirit arise out of spiritless matter? That would be the greatest of the world-riddles. Hence, it may properly be said, that the law-abiding order and development of nature and history, this fundamental thought of science, does not exclude the belief in God, but rather demands it for its own foundation. Thus is the harmonization of science and religion made certain.

But a peace-compact between them is not all that is possible; they can and they should mutually help one another. Religion contains a regulative for science, in so far as it protests against one-sided world-views, such as materialism, positivism, nihilism and illusionism, in which the facts of the spiritual, particularly of the moral-religious life, are deprived of part of their rights. Conversely, science serves as a regulative for religion; for with that which science has recognized to be undoubted truth concerning nature or history, the religious view of the world must place itself in harmony, and whatever therein contradicts the traditional ideas can not retain validity as actual objective truth. A

## Religion and Science

double natured truth is an impossibility; that would be a self-contradiction of reason and a denial of the unity of God, who is the one cause of all truth.

Religion, therefore, must abandon such traditional ideas as contradict the verified scientific knowledge of truth. In the course of its history this has been done often enough, even though it was regretfully and reluctantly done. In the end, however, it was always manifest that religion lost nothing of its actual value by such concessions, but rather gained in spiritual depth and purity. For those ideas were no more than the impurities left over from the childhood period of the race; the sensual forms and the wrappings which survive from the nature religion are being consumed in the fire of scientific criticism, so that their spiritual content remains increasingly pure, and religion approaches more and more closely to the ideal—the worship of God in spirit and in truth. This end is served particularly by the widening of the angle of vision, so that it includes not merely a single positive religion but the whole history of religion. Naturally, a naïve piety at first is pained and disturbed even by that, as we had occasion to see recently in the Babel-Bible controversy.

But it is a fact that only he really knows one religion who knows more than one religion. Not only does the study of comparative religions make us tolerant in our attitude toward other religions, because it demonstrates that the divine logos dis-

## Religion and Historic Faiths

tributed the seed-corns of the true and the good throughout the world among men, but it also teaches us to understand our own religion better because of the clearer differentiation between the essential and the accidental, the permanent and the temporary.

The question is asked: But what becomes of "revelation" in all of this? Well, it is apparent that we shall have to relinquish the notion of a unique revelation and of a single, infallible revelation; but, in the end, that, too, is no harm, but a benefit. For not until then do we learn to know revelation in its full breadth and greatness and in its divine-human nature, as the one divine light, which, through the medium of human spirits, breaks into manifold rays and colors. No longer is it narrowed to one little corner of the earth called Palestine, or to a time long since past, but in all lands and in all ages God has made Himself known and has permitted pure souls to find Him, when they sought Him with earnestness and reverence. If, thereby, Christianity is robbed of its title to being the only religion, it does not alter the fact that it is the highest and the best. Our valuation of our own religion no longer remains an untested faith, but by comparison with other historical religions becomes knowledge tried and tested.

Thus, we achieve the result that, instead of destroying religion, science has, from of old, performed the most valuable services for religion and will continue to perform them. But science can

## Religion and Science

only do this, if religion does not assume guardianship over it, granting the fullest freedom to research, and even more, regarding science as a servant of truth, that is, of God. The more the light of knowledge unites with the warmth of the heart and with the strength of faith, love and hope, so much the more will man become the temple of the living God.

## IV

### THE BEGINNINGS OF RELIGION

WHAT do we know of the beginnings of religion? Accurately speaking, nothing. For all historical testimony does not carry us back to the first beginnings of religion, any more than it does to those of language. If we wish to be honest, we must confess that we know nothing of the conditions which obtained at the beginning of man in general, and that we never will have certain knowledge concerning them. Suppositions only can be offered, suppositions which may have more or less probability as far as they rest on reasoning backward by analogy, from things known to things unknown; but they are always to be differentiated carefully from certain knowledge; none of these hypotheses can be verified, hence there need be no controversy regarding them.

Such suppositions are above all based on analogies with the present primitive (wild) people, concerning whom it may be accepted that they are comparatively nearest to the beginnings of the human race. In the religions of the cultured, there are to be found everywhere certain elements which

## The Beginnings of Religion

do not harmonize with the high state of culture obtaining, with the average plane of the intellectual and moral culture, hence they may be regarded as survivals of some previous plane. If these survivals correspond or are closely related to the common fundamentals of the religion of the primitives the supposition seems not without justification, that traces of the beginnings of religion may have been preserved in them. Care must be had in such reasoning backward, for it cannot be asserted at the outset that the religion of the wild man is really a petrified beginning of all human religion; the possibility of regress, a degeneration from higher beginnings, is not to be disregarded, the less so, since many signs tend to the demonstration of such a fact.

We must also guard against the frequent confusion of the oldest theoretical basis of religion with religion itself. The primitive world-view, or childish folk metaphysics, which may be recognized everywhere, with astonishing regularity, as the common basis of the most varied religions, is "Animism," which is to be understood as a belief in souls or spirits in the broadest sense. This belief compasses a diversity of things, and, therefore, cannot be explained by a single psychological root, but requires a number of them. The first is ascribing soul to nature, as we may observe it to-day, unconsciously done by children and consciously done by poets. This explains itself; the natural tendency

## Religion and Historic Faiths

of man conceives external objects as analogous to his own inner conditions, carrying over to them his own emotions and passions especially regarding all the effects arising from the objects after the analogy of his own activities, hence looking upon them as voluntary actions, which predicate a friendly or inimical intention on the part of the object acting. So the child strikes the foot of the table, against which he struck himself, because he regards the unpleasant effect as a consequence of the inimical purpose of the table, upon which he then seeks to revenge himself. So deeply rooted is this tendency to personification or psychification of things, that civilized man occasionally grows angry at "the perversity of things," as, for instance, when the pen refuses to write. Why should we wonder then at primitive man, when he ascribes to all the things in nature, the immovable and more especially the movable things, a manlike soul with friendly or inimical purposes? At first, this soul is in no way dissociated from the material thing; it is nothing other than the thing itself conceived as a being with emotions and will, hence very different from the free gods. How might these latter have become possible? Several psychological motives may have contributed thereto.

Foremost, the experiences of the dream-phenomena: When, in a dream, we experience the presence of people who live at a great distance or of friends long since dead, and they seem to live again with

## The Beginnings of Religion

us, or when we journey to distant lands and experience wonderful things, then *we* know that our fantasy has conjured up these pictures, but the primitive man does not know that and therefore considers such phenomena to be just as real as those of his waking hours; yet, his understanding tells him that it was not possible for his body to make such long journeys in the few short hours of the night, and that distant or dead friends could not have entered bodily through the closed doors and visited him. One explanation remains for him: for the time his soul wandered out of his body into distant space, and the souls of his friends visited him in the night. This soul is regarded as the exact double of the bodily man, only that it consists of an air-like material, and, therefore, it is far more mobile than his coarse-material body to which, as its ordinary dwelling-place, the soul is usually bound, but it can leave him at times and wander about freely. That the soul can forsake its body permanently, primitive man becomes convinced at the sight of the dying: he sees the change of the body, a moment ago it moved with strength, now a quiet man lies there and he can explain this change only by saying that the soul has forsaken this body, with the last breath it rode away; therefore, he concludes, it is identical with a breath, a wind; or it escaped with the streaming blood, hence it resides in the blood, it is its warmth, its vapor. That the soul should cease to be at the death of the body is a thought entirely



## Religion and Historic Faiths

foreign to the primitive; it has merely wandered off, but it does certainly live on as a breath or a shadow, and this is the more certain, for it appears again often in dreams or hallucinations. The departed soul can return and enter into a new body as a dwelling-place, either into a human body, into some new-born grandchild as the Indians believe and thus explain atavism, or into an animal body, particularly of birds and snakes, which are frequently regarded as the embodiment of ancestors' souls. These ancestors' souls differ from the souls of the things of nature spoken of above by their decided human individuality and their freedom from bodily limitations, their independent freedom of motion; as against that, these souls must do without the powerful and constant enduring mode of action which pertains to the greater of the things nature endowed with soul. A fusion of these two conceptions of souls could not be far from their thoughts, and therein the idea of god-beings was included.

Meanwhile a third form of spirit must be added, which is, to a certain extent, rooted in primitive logic—spirits based on abstract ideas, which have been made independent and personified. When single trees or springs of water strike the primitive man, he may well worship the powerful and beneficent soul therein as a deity; but when the same man sees many trees gathered together as a wood, he groups the many single specimens into a unit of the

## The Beginnings of Religion

kind and thinks of this unit again as an independent spirit-being, which bears to each single tree the relation of prototype and creator of its particular life:—the forest-god. In like fashion, there emerges from the single springs a general water-god, above single fires, a fire-god; above the winds, the wind-god—everywhere the idea of the species made independent as the creative power of the single phenomena. So, too, animal and plant species are traced back to one typical original as the divine creator and preserver of each individual specimen. Finally, every human social group—races, generations and families—is traced back to a single divine ancestor, which is scarcely the spirit of an individual progenitor, but rather a spirit-being growing out of the idea of the unity of the group and then made independent. In this same category of personification of abstract ideas belong the gods of activities and conditions, such as growth, fertility, birth and death, disease and health, war and peace and every other form of cultural activity possible, as well as virtues and vices and the like. Lately, this sort of deities of activity have been designated as “momentary deities,” because they only make themselves manifest at times, and they are regarded as the original forms, out of which, in the course of time, the permanent, great gods developed; such a theory is not susceptible of proof.

In general, it seems to me to be a useless dispute as to which of these different kinds of souls or

## Religion and Historic Faiths

spirits may have been the earlier, and which the later; enough that they are to be found in all of the oldest religions known to us, and that we are able to explain their psychological origin. If we cast a glance at the historical religions, in which that which was primal has been comparatively best preserved, such as the Chinese and Egyptian, the proximate supposition seems to be that the being, in which a particular communal group, family or clan or race or people found its deity, originated in a combination of the collective ancestral spirits of the group with a personified nature-power, either of heaven (China), or of the sun (Japan, Peru, Egypt, Ra), or of earth and earthly spirits of fruitfulness (Isis-Osiris, Magna Mater), or of a certain species of animal (the sacred animals of the Egyptian provinces and other totemistic tribes). Why, in particular cases, this, that, or the other being in nature, was deified, we cannot explain, and it is not essential; the main fact remains, that each of these groups worships in its god the power by which their common life as members thereof and their nature-environment was caused and preserved; for each of his worshippers, the god is the creating and preserving power of life, making the group collectively permanent. From all of this it might seem as though the god were the deified person of some historical ancestor,—the well-known theory of Euhemeros, recently taken up again by Herbert Spencer and others. But this theory is erroneous; it is

## The Beginnings of Religion

refuted by the indisputable fact that the tribe-god of the oldest religions is not thought of as a man, but as a living nature-being of heavenly or earthly kind. Hence, it has been correctly said by E. Caird that he was not worshipped as a god because he was an ancestor, but because he was worshipped as a god he was held to be the ancestor, the race-father of his worshippers.

Naturally, for us it is an idea scarce conceivable, that a sensual object of nature, such as heaven or sun or earth, or a mountain, a tree, a river, an animal, should have produced men; but we must not permit the difficulty involved to lead us to a negation of this idea, which recurs everywhere in the oldest religions and underlies countless myths, nor must we permit ourselves to weaken it to a mere imaginative symbolism. In the earliest period there is no such thing as symbolism in the sense of conscious picture-language; at that time everything had actual, bodily meaning. Besides, there are two things which must be taken into consideration here: first, that the difficulty involved herein for us was not a difficulty for early men; and for this reason they did not have our sharp differentiation between various species of beings, between men, animals, plants, between things living and things without life. They were far removed from such an idea, and so, too, as it did not seem unnatural to them that the one should go over or be transformed into the other, so it did not seem im-

## Religion and Historic Faiths

possible to them that the one should be born of the other.

However, let us not overlook the fact that in this idea which seems so incredible to us, there is hidden a core of reason. In the idea of the tribal-god, early man united two things into one, the superhuman, mysterious, permanent power which is expressed in his nature-side, and the close relationship with men, which he maintains in his capacity as the father of the tribe; a relationship which causes mutual connection, that of protecting rulership on the one side and of veneration on the other. If he were not a nature-being, then he would not possess that superior, permanent power which is not separable from the god-idea; if he were not at the same time the father (or the mother) of the tribe, the source of the common life of the generations, the firm bond uniting him with men, the point of contact of the religious relation, would be missing. So you see that that idea which at first glance seemed to us so paradoxical, even grotesque, that idea of god in primitive religion, is only the naïve, and for the childish spirit, the only possible form of expression of that reasonable thought of God, as the unity of the superhuman and inner human being, of nature and spirit.

From the beginning, this idea of God served not only to furnish the other part of a religious alliance, but it was also the moral bond of community for the worshippers of the same god. Originally, there

## The Beginnings of Religion

was no other moral tie for man than this religious one; the members of the tribe, in their common attachment to their divine creator, preserver and protector, felt themselves bound into a solidarity with one another. From the beginning, the religious and the social community were one and the same; the latter could not extend beyond the former, hence the narrow confines of the cult-community and the realm of the god. Yet, however narrow its limits, it was some sort of a community, in which a religious faith was cherished and ceremonially made active. The opinion that religion began as a matter of the individual, and with the worship of divine beings which belonged to the individuals, is a complete error. Everywhere in human history the natural community based on blood-relationship was the first; in this solidarity the individual was merged without regard; and only gradually and very slowly came the thought of the peculiar right and justification of the individual. Thus it was in all the realms of culture and not least in the realm of religion. Here, too, the beginning was the common worship by the blood-related group,—the individual had no other gods and worshipped no other gods than those of his tribe. If he was expelled from the tribe or excluded from the cult, he felt himself thereby separated from his god, and a prey to strange gods, from whom nothing good was to be expected; that was why the man of ancient

## Religion and Historic Faiths

days dreaded expulsion from his native place and the cult of his home.

Concerning the oldest form of worship of God, scarcely anything can be said without running the risk of carrying later customs back to the beginnings. Appeals to the god and sacrifices were probably always a part of worship; but it is a difficult thing to say what the original meaning of the sacrifice was. It is not at all certain that it was a tribute to the god from the beginning; many signs seem to point in favor of the view of Robertson Smith, the learned and keen research-worker in religion, who holds that the sacrifice was originally nothing else than a "holy communion," whether it be taken in the sense of a common meal to which the gods were invited as guests and received their portion of the food and drink, or, perhaps, in the older sense, that the life of the god itself was thought to dwell in the life of the man or beast sacrificed and, by the enjoyment of this raw meat and blood, possession of the divine life was entered into. According to this, the later customs of the mysteries, which, without doubt, had some such underlying thought, would be but refined forms of the oldest sacrifice-worship. This same purpose of union with the god is served by the orgiastic dances, in which the participants usually enveloped themselves in the garments and the masks of the gods: they thought that thus they exchanged their nature for that of the god and the ecstatic ravings appear, then, as the

## The Beginnings of Religion

effect of the entrance and possession of them by the god (enthusiasm). In remotest antiquity, there are also found those customs generally designated "Analogy-magic"—activities which imitate a divine activity, such as fructifying the earth, rain and like processes of nature, in order to hasten or produce such processes. The term "Analogy-magic" is likely to be misleading, for, originally, those acts were not merely put forth as analogies or pictures, but as actual and effective coöperation with the workings of the god, and were thus regarded as a real means to a desired effect. Later, when this original sense was no longer understood, the activity degenerated into a mere ceremony and a magic effect was ascribed to it. So, generally, the initial, naïve-religious ceremonies of worship might be the source and origin of what was later actual "magic," and, therefore, the latter is not a beginning, but a degeneration of religion; for in it man does not act in the service of the god and for his purposes, but without the god and against him, man desires to achieve his own purposes by mysterious means.

A like reasoning holds of fetishism, which, without any more right than in the case of magic, has been declared to be a beginning of religion. The word "fetish" means an arbitrary natural or artificial thing, serving as a ceremonial means of worship, in so far as there attaches to it the idea of the presence and effective power of a god. Such



## Religion and Historic Faiths

sacramental signs of the *praesens numen* are found in all cults, because they satisfy the natural need for a visible representation of the divine. But nowhere are they simply identical with the god, nowhere are they the adequate expression of its nature. The Japanese considers the mirror in the temple of the goddess of the sun as a sign of the presence of the goddess, but it never occurs to him to consider it as the divine sun itself. How would it be possible to explain psychologically that men had looked upon dead things as their gods, when they had not seen any activities on their part? It is only after the idea of God had been won in the manner already described that arbitrary things could be placed in such relation to the god and then serve as a means by which the presence of the god at the service was achieved. Naturally, the superstitious idea might easily grow out of this, as though the sacred thing in itself, aside from its ceremonial relation to the god, possessed a supernatural wonder-working power which the individual might employ in the production of such magical effects as he desired. Thus, what was originally a means of worship becomes a means of magic; what was originally a pious representation of the god forces itself into its place and becomes a substitute for the god. Fetishism is the apt name for this superstitious degeneration of religion; hence, the practice of calling fetishism the original religion of men ought, finally, to cease.

## The Beginnings of Religion

If you wish to have a fixed name for the original religion, such as our reasoning backward from what is known, proves to have been the most probable, then I would propose to call it *naïve-patriarchal Henotheism*. Naturally, the difference between that and universal ethical monotheism must be well kept in mind. The latter, the belief in one all-governing God did not develop until thousands of years had elapsed; while the patriarchal henotheism is the naïve belief of each tribe in its own particular tribe-god and tribe-father, which is for all the members of the tribe the one highest, and, in a certain sense, that of producer, the one actual, divine power, to whom, and through whom, all the members of the tribe feel themselves bound absolutely. But this particular tribal god of each separate tribe does not in any way exclude the tribal gods of other tribes, but rather presupposes them; he stands to them in exactly the same relationship of rivalry, and nearly always of decided enmity, as in the early ages one tribe stood toward its neighboring tribes. Again, this henotheism is not yet a spiritual-moral theism, for this tribal god is, as we have seen, entirely an object of nature, and his relation to his worshippers is a naturalistic one, based entirely upon physical descent.

Yet we will be permitted to say that despite its childlike simplicity, this initial faith contains the germs of all higher religious development. Even here, the idea of God releases the fundamental re-

## Religion and Historic Faiths

ligious emotion—veneration—in which dependence and freedom, fear and confidence are united; it matters not that now one, and now the other, gains greater strength, especially the fear of the incalculable moods of the nature-gods which play so large a part. And it is not to be gainsaid that even this faith has its moral importance. By uniting the comrades of one tribe in a common worship, he elevates the tie of blood-relationship to an absolute obligation of reciprocal solidarity, and impresses on each individual the elementary moral duty of surrender to the common welfare. It is natural that the narrowness of the religious community holds as to the moral obligation; those who do not belong to the tribe are strangers and enemies, toward whom this early stage recognizes no such thing as a moral obligation. Rather, it is accounted a religious duty to revenge the blood of a member of the tribe when a stranger has spilled it; this duty of blood-revenge, with the endless feuds resulting therefrom, was a great obstruction to culture everywhere. Thus, the narrow tribal religion acted within as a disciplinary and cultivating power; while without, it was a power which made men nearer to the beast and opposed civilization.

Progress from the henotheistic religion of the tribe led nearly always to the polytheistic religion of the people. Polytheism, or the belief in a number of gods, one alongside the other, is never the original religion, but the result of historical devel-

## The Beginnings of Religion

opment. When, either by reason of treaties or by military subjection of one under the other, various tribes unite together to form a larger people, they retain their original gods, but separation of the one from the other no longer can be maintained. With the union of the people, the need of placing the particular gods in some ordered relation to one another appears. Either the gods are genealogically arranged by making some children and grandchildren of others, or feudally arranged by gradation of rank under one over-lord, one god-king, who is usually the particular deity of the governing people or of the capital city of the reigning dynasty. To which must be added, that in these larger social groups, culture is more richly developed and differentiated; various trades begin, the arts, the political and military vocations, and then a special group for the regular care of religion, the priesthood. With all of this, the life of man achieves a richer content, and that, in turn, casts its reflection upon the world of the gods. Now there is assigned to each god his particular duties and department of government. Thus, each single god acquires an individual character, which he had not had as a tribal god; now they become actual personalities after the image of men. Naturally, at this stage, the former animal figure of the god must give way to the human likeness. This was mainly so in the case of the Greek religion; there zoömorphism disappeared entirely. Cer-

## Religion and Historic Faiths

tainly, that was an important step forward; for not until the god was represented as a man could human thoughts and free action with a conscious purpose be ascribed to him. This humanization of the old nature-gods was not completely carried out everywhere: in Egypt the process stopped half-way, hence those remarkable semi-animal and semi-human representations of the gods of the Egyptians. Among the Greeks the recollection of the former animal form is preserved only in the animals which accompany the gods as symbols, though originally they were more than symbols.

With this humanization and systemization of the gods the religious relation undergoes a change; no longer can it remain the simple naturalistic relation of descent, for the various families of a people can no longer be related by blood to all the gods of the whole people. So that now, instead of the patriarchal tie, there appears a political bond: the people see in the gods their celestial lords, as the princes are their earthly ones; in the highest god, they see the heavenly Olympian king, the prototype of the mundane king. And herewith enters the most important motive in the beliefs of the peoples—the god of the people is held to be the originator and guardian of the civil order and the avenger of injustice which violates that order. Justice on earth derives its power and authority from justice in heaven; hence the early belief in the divine

## The Beginnings of Religion

Nemesis, which punishes the blasphemer either here, or, as the Egyptians early believed, in the world beyond. Beyond doubt, this belief in divine retribution was of immeasurable educative importance in the development of civilization among the peoples. Again, it is true, that with the sprouting of human culture, the phenomena of nature were more openly and objectively regarded, freer from the needs of the moment; the regularity of the changes of the seasons and the movements of the heavenly bodies are beginning to be observed, and in this order of the world of nature, there is recognized the counterpart of the moral-legal order of human society. Hence, we find this double-sided order frequently combined into one idea, and in several religions of the older period, it is partially personified and partly regarded as an impersonal power; thus, among the Egyptians, it is Maat, the daughter of Ra; among the Indians, Rita; among the Persians, Asha vahista; among the Chinese, Tao; among the Greeks, Dike and Nemesis. Everywhere, there is understood by it a uniform world-order, which includes the order of nature, the civil order of law, the religious order of worship. Of course, it does not differ essentially from the will of the god, but is rather the expression of his constant world-ordering government. Therewith, the moodiness and the arbitrariness characteristic of the nature-gods disappear, and regularity, righteousness, wisdom, and, even something of the

## Religion and Historic Faiths

character of goodness, find a place in the character of the god.

Upon this plane, we find, for the first time, moral characteristics connected with the idea of God; it begins to be an ethical and spiritual idea. Naturally, this moral idealization of the nature-gods is not accomplished easily nor all at once, for both the naturalistic character of the gods of the people, more or less crystallized in myths, as well as what has been said above, are hindrances. As nature-beings, the gods are morally indifferent and act upon mood and natural desire; as bearers of the legal order, they must assume the attitude of order—the two are hard to reconcile. Hence, those remarkable contradictions in the pictures, for example, of Zeus, Apollo and Hera in Homer; alongside the frivolous myths, in which wickedness and immorality of every kind are told concerning the gods, there runs an ideal trait of moral elevation. In some measure, one might say that, in their official life as regents of the world, they are moral ideals; while in their mythical private life, they are filled with human weakness and passions.

The progress of the history of religion moved mainly along the line of this struggle between the old naturalism and the higher moral ideal. The serious thinkers and prophets struggled on the side of the moral ideal everywhere, but they were rarely successful; the mass generally stopped at uncertain compromises, that "limping to both sides," of

## The Beginnings of Religion

which Zarathustra had no less occasion to complain than Elijah. Hand in hand with this struggle went the other between the multiplicity of the gods and the unity of the divine world-government. Progress beyond the polytheism of the popular religion went forward in two ways: the one led through philosophic reflection to the disintegration of the various gods into a single all-god, which, as the world-soul or the world-spirit fills all, vivifies it and serves as the root of all the change of becoming and dissolving by being its permanent cause.

This pantheism was possible with polytheism, while the single gods were regarded as forms of manifestation or emanations of the all-god, as was the case in the exoteric Brahmanism and Stoicism; but, with a rigid acceptance of the all-one god, the separate gods disappear, as does the manifold of existence in general, to a mere, vain semblance. The other path starts out from the religious demand for a uniform moral world-government and elevates the highest god of the people to the position of sole bearer of the government high above all the other gods, lowering the latter so far in value and power, that they finally lose their divine character, and the highest god remains finally the only one. That is monotheism or the belief in the sole rulership of one God as the lord of the entire universe. First steps to this double-sided development are to be found among the Egyptians and Chinese; first steps to monotheism are found among the Persians,



## Religion and Historic Faiths

Babylonians and Israelites, but the last-named alone fully developed it. Pantheistic unity was completed by the Indians in Brahmanism and, in a certain sense, in Buddhism (which has also been termed atheism); while among the Greeks, it remained merely the philosophic teaching of single schools (Elëatics, Heraclitus, Stoics). Christianity may be interpreted as the higher unity of the Jewish and the Greek ideas of God.

Finally, a word about the division of the history of religion. According to their extent, the religions may be divided into tribal, national and universal (world-) religions. According to their inner nature, they fall into two main groups: nature-religions and historical or moral or personal (prophetic) religions; the first of these groups may be sub-divided into henotheistic (tribal) and polytheistic (national) religions; the second main group may be sub-divided into religions of law and of redemption. Little as may be urged against this division in theory, its practical application throughout is difficult, because it is not possible without frequent violent disruption of historical connections. Hence, in the presentation of the history of religion, I prefer a more modest division, either the ethnological (according to races and peoples) or the chronological; naturally, even with this division, a certain latitude must be retained for the sake of fitness.

## V

### THE CHINESE RELIGION

WE begin with this religion, because it occupies a position peculiarly isolated. The ancient Chinese state-religion is not actually a polytheistic national religion, for it lacks all mythology as well as an organized priesthood. It might be termed belief in spirits systematized to exact correspondence with the political organization of the realm, wherein the higher gods resulted from a fusion of the ancestral spirits of the ruling families with the higher nature-spirits. At the head stands heaven (Tien) or the "highest lord" (Shang-ti). As Tiele aptly says, in him, the highest object of the worship of the dead (the species-spirit of the imperial ancestors) has absorbed the highest nature-god. The question as to whether this highest god is the visible heaven itself or a divine person standing over and governing it, cannot be answered from the standpoint of the popular religion any more than the analogous question in the case of the Japanese goddess of the sun; for the popular religion, the visible heaven (in Japan, the shining sun) is the highest world-governing power, which is, at the same time, a spiritual being, acting with

## Religion and Historic Faiths

understanding and will, the "upper Emperor," who orders and rules the world of nature and of men.

The Chinese say that heaven does not speak to the individual man, but reveals itself in regular unchangeable order of nature and in the constant order of states, which bear the relation of exact correspondence to one another. Therefore, disturbances of nature, such as lasting drought and barrenness, point to corresponding mistakes in the national government. Just as the order of nature holds as prototype and form for moral action, so the arrangements of state are considered to be laws of nature. However true the thought contained herein may be, that life in nature as in man has in God its common ground, and ordering principle, yet it does betray a naturalistic limitation, that the difference between natural eventuation and the free moral action of men has not yet entered into consciousness; what is missing is the conception of the personal spirit which determines itself and forms its own social ideals out of its own thinking. The Chinaman does not regard his government as a product of the national will, whose development is dependent upon free action, but as a product of nature as necessary and as unchangeable as, let us say, the state of the bees. So, in his consideration of history, every teleological viewpoint is lacking and with it every thought of a progressive development which shall realize ideals; his glance is ever turned upon the past in which he finds the

## The Chinese Religion

models for the present and the confirmatory examples for the similar, elementary laws of human life, particularly for the inevitable concatenation of guilt and fate. The advantage of such a mode of thinking, for the preservation of what is, is just as clear as the disadvantage, the hindrance to individual self-activity and free progress of culture.

As the various higher and lower officials of the Chinese Empire stand under the earthly Emperor, so under the heaven-spirit range the spirits of the sun, the moon and the stars, the earth and the four world-quarters, the forests and the hills, the springs and the rivers, which now, as spirits of a species, rule over an entire realm, and again as single spirits are bound to certain places and phenomena. Finally, there are the ancestral spirits of single families, which are again ranked into those of the higher and of the lower orders of the people. As with the highest heaven-spirit, so the spirits of the noble families have fused with nature-spirits, and they with certain realms of nature within their provinces.

This hierarchy in the spirit-world corresponds to a rigidly-regulated order of worship. Common to them all is the worship of ancestors by families which is celebrated in every house on all festive occasions of the family life; in the hall of the ancestors, before the tablets bearing the names of the ancestors, father and mother perform the rites, consisting of prayers and offerings of flowers, followed

## Religion and Historic Faiths

by a common meal, to which, in conformity with ancient custom, the spirits are invited. Often their unseen presence is rendered visible by selecting one of the boys of the house, dressing him in the clothes of his dead grandfather and placing him in the seat of honor at the table, so that he, the "dead boy," represents the whole spirit-host of the ancestors of the house and serves, at the same time, as the visible guarantee of their gracious presence and their blessed participation in the fortunes of the house. Each one has the free right to pray to the higher spirits of heaven and earth and the four quarters state to perform the festival rites in worship of them. At the feasts of the spring and the autumn, the Emperor makes sacrifice in the open air to the spirits of heaven and earth and the four quarters of the heaven, and in like fashion, the governors of provinces worship the particular spirits of their provinces. The highest festival is the festival of the royal ancestors, at which the Emperor, surrounded by the highest dignitaries of the realm, makes various sacrifices to the ancestors of his house and to all of his predecessors upon the throne, whereupon the spirits are invited by music and the singing of songs to participate in the sacrificial meal. Here, too, the "dead boy" appears; it is one of the imperial grandsons, who represents, in his person, the highest ancestral host of the realm. This is the festival which marks the highest point of Chinese worship, and is typical in character; no

## The Chinese Religion

priesthood functions as mediator of supermundane powers or for the winning of supermundane benefits, but civic authorities, representing the Chinese nation, celebrate by thanksgiving and prayer the continuance of the state, inextricably bound up with the will of the god; it is a state-religion in so peculiar a degree, as can be found only among the Romans, where the state was also not only the subject, but, at bottom, the object of religion, represented in Jupiter Capitolinus and later in the Cæsars. That this lack of priesthood, church and theology, this immediate oneness of religion and political state, was very useful in political regard is best shown by the history of China, which owes the five thousand year duration of its government to that firm basis. But the other side of this political usefulness is the lack of depth and heartiness in the religion, a lack of content of ideas which satisfy spirit and soul; the Chinese religion lacks not only priests but prophets—the inspired bearers of eternal ideals. The stability of state and religion was purchased at the price of enchainment to unchangeable popular forms and ceremonies, at the price of the suppression of personal freedom and of historical progress.

Nevertheless, China did not lack wise teachers, who exercised a deep influence upon the thought of the people. Chief among them were Lâu-tsze and Confucius, both of the sixth century B.C. Lâu-tsze, born 604 B.C., in the province of Thsu, was an offi-

## Religion and Historic Faiths

cial in the imperial house of Tsheu; at a ripe old age, however, disgusted by the condition of public affairs, he went into voluntary exile, but not until he had left his work, "Tao-te-King," with his disciples. This "Book of Tao" contains many a puzzle for the learned men of our own day. What does Tao mean? Really *way*, but it also means much more. It has been compared to the Indian Brahma and to the Heraclitean-Stoic logos; only recently, Guimet, the well-known Parisian student of religious research, attempted to prove, in a lecture delivered at the Congress of the Historians of Religion at Basle (September, 1904), that Lâo-tsze's Tao doctrine originated in India and that in Tao are gathered up the conceptions of Brahma (world-spirit), Karma (law of causation), Dharma (law of moral conduct), and Boddhi (highest wisdom and sanctity). I am not going to take up the question whether this hypothesis can be proved or not; instead of disputing about it, I hold it more to the purpose to impart to you some literal extracts from this mysterious book itself; you will certainly gain the impression that the author was a deep and noble thinker, perhaps too deep to find true understanding among the Chinese people. I quote from the translation of the learned student of Chinese language and literature, Reinhold von Pläenkner (Leipzig, 1870).

"There does exist an all-filling, completely perfect being, which existed before heaven and earth. It exists in sublime

## The Chinese Religion

stillness, it is eternal and unchangeable and permeates unhindered everywhere. One might look upon it as the creator of the world. I do not know its name, but I like best to call it Tao; if I were to give it an attribute, it would be that of highest sublimity. Yes, sublime is that being, about which moves the all and all in all; as such, it must be eternal, and as it is eternal, it must, consequently, be omnipresent. Yes, Tao is sublime, sublime is heaven, sublime the earth, sublime, too, is the ideal of men. Thus there are four sublime beings in the universe, and without doubt, the ideal of man is one of them. For man originates from earth, the earth from heaven, the heaven originated in Tao, and Tao, without question, found its origin in itself. The whole of created nature, all its doing and its working, is but an emanation of Tao—Tao making itself visible. Although this being is all spirit and no matter, yet does it compass all things visible and all beings are in it. Inconceivable and invisible, however, there dwells in it a sublime spirit. This spirit is the highest and most perfect being, for in it are truth, faith, trust. From eternity unto eternity, its glory will never cease, for in it is the union of the true, the good and the beautiful in the highest degree of perfection. But how can I know that? I know it from itself, from Tao. (Our consciousness of God then is the inner revelation of the same divine spirit, which reveals itself in the external world as the basis of all reasonable order and harmony.) For through this spirit, the incomplete achieves completion, perfection, fulfillment; him who is bowed down, it raises up, it strengthens the weak, corrects the imperfect, as it gives new life to barren vales, new life and freshness to ruins. There are, naturally, only a few who understand that, most men are blinded by error. But the wise man grasps Tao, compasses it in its totality and places it before the world as a luminous model. For, even though it be not seen, it shines clearly toward us everywhere; and though it stand not before our eyes as itself, it doth make itself known through its revelations. Though it does not praise itself for its works, yet its works do praise it. Though it does not show itself in its sublimity, yet its sublimity surpasses all things. How could



## Religion and Historic Faiths

there be any desire to dispute concerning it? The words which those of old had already spoken 'That which is imperfect, he will perfect,' they are not vain words. No, we will in truth see perfection in light, when we enter into and return to him."

That the knowledge of truth is mediated by the dialectic of contraries, that deep thought, which governed the philosophy of Heraclitus, the contemporary of Lâo-tsze is expressed in the following sentences, which I offer according to Guimet's translation: "What was it which made all recognize the beautiful as beautiful, it was the ugly; that they knew the good to be good, it was the bad; thus being and not-being, the material and the non-material, the light and the heavy, the high and the low, mutually produce one the other. Therefore will the wise man make both, the non-material as well as the material, the object of his thinking knowledge."

And now, something about the moral principles, which Lâo-tsze logically deduced from his Tao-speculation:

"In all that you do, obey the Tao, then will the Tao be so one with you, as virtue with the virtuous. How would it be possible to see the Tao and yet be bad, to go forward in one's knowledge and go backward in one's morals? or conversely, how can a man despise the Tao and be good and righteous? True, by industry, one can protect oneself against poverty, by equanimity, conquer the everyday happenings of life; but purity and clarity of spirit are needed in order to know the right, the good and the perfect in the world, and to act in accordance with that knowledge and to be an exemplar

## The Chinese Religion

of the dignity of man. He who knows men is clever, but he who knows himself is enlightened. He who conquers others has a hero's might, but he who conquers himself has strength of soul. He who understands how to be contented, he is rich, and he who acts energetically, he has will-power. He who does not lose his Ego, continues permanently, he dies but he is not extinguished, he has won eternal life. What is of greater concern to us, our reputation or our Ego? Which has greater value, wealth or Ego? Are not the consequences of the sins, which we commit easily in the pursuit of earthly goods, much worse for the salvation of our soul than the loss of all gathered treasures? The heart of the wise man beats equally for all humanity. Toward him who is good and noble, I am similarly inclined, says the wise man, and toward him who stumbles and falls, ought I not also to be good? Toward him who is not upright and honest, ought I to act faithlessly and dishonestly? No. See, that (being good and faithful even to the stumbler and the dishonest) is true goodness of heart and true uprightness and loyalty, which emanates from heavenly virtue. The wise man regards and treats human beings as his very own children. He has three treasures, whose soul is filled with Tao; they are love, which is strength of soul, and contentedness, which is greatness of soul; and humility, which never urges itself to the fore. Those who fight with the weapons of love, they win the greatest victory, the victory over themselves; thereby they are protected from all misfortune and shielded from all evil, hence they have eternal life. As water, which is the most yielding and most movable, overcomes that which is firm and strong, so, says the wise man, that which is weak and yielding overcomes that which is unbending and hard. The wise man carries the dust of the earth and yet he is called the master of all masters, he bears the sorrows of the world and yet he is called the king of the whole world. As the powerful rivers sway all because they descend into everything, so the wise man: if he wishes to stand over all the people, he must go down among them with word and teaching; if he wishes to be a guiding light for them by wisdom and strength of spirit, then the best method is to place his

## Religion and Historic Faiths

own person in the background. Whoever wishes to maintain his superiority over the people, must never let them feel any kind of pressure, must never injure or enslave them, but must do all manner of good to them. Then will the world acclaim him, love and honor him, and, since he has given no occasion for discontent and quarrel, the world will live in peace and there will not be combat or discontent anywhere on earth.—”

I have said that the teaching of Lâu-tsze was too high, too ideal for the “common sense” of the Chinese which was directed only to what was useful. Lâu-tsze found but a small circle of adherents and what is worse, within this circle, there was so little understanding of his depth, that, in the course of time, it became perverted into the nonsense of a spiritless superstition and crude witchcraft, so that the Tao sect to-day is the least respected of any among cultured Chinese.

Lâu-tsze's younger contemporary, Confucius, had much better fortune. Born 551 B.C., in the province of Lu, he began his teaching as a young man of twenty-two. He led an unsettled life, now patronized by the duke of his province, even acting as his minister at one time, then, falling from favor because of his loyalty to his convictions, he was exiled and wandered about homelessly for many years, living on the benevolence of his friends. Finally, at the end of his long life, he was recalled with honors, but accepted no new office, living entirely for his studies until his death in 478. Confucius desired to teach nothing new, but only to

## The Chinese Religion

transmit the pure and uncurtailed traditions of the ancients, which are unchangeable, because of their heavenly origin. He was more a teacher of morals and statecraft, more a writer and a historian than a prophet or founder of a religion. Religiously cold, even to skepticism, he had no high regard for prayer and did not meddle with transcendental questions. Nevertheless, he was a noble ethical thinker, who, in some respects, reminds us of our own Kant, both in that which he said and in that which he left unsaid. He never expressed himself polemically against the beliefs or the customs of his people; his nature was far too conservative for that. His heart, however, was not with the religious traditions; his interest was limited to the moral principles.

Concerning spirits, he said: "Honor them with a sense of piety, but hold yourself aloof from them." When he was asked whether they should be worshipped with sacrifices, and whether they knew of or benefitted by the sacrifices, he answered: "Honor the spirits of thy ancestors, and act as though they were the ever-present witnesses of thy actions, but seek to know nothing further concerning them." When asked concerning things after death, he gave this opinion: "As long as you do not know life, how can you know anything concerning death?" With all that, he was not merely a moralist, but his ethics was based upon a religious foundation, somewhat in the sense of Fichte's faith

## Religion and Historic Faiths

in the moral world-order. Human life, Confucius taught, should be regulated according to the unchangeable, fixed order of natural and social existence laid down by heaven; this "decree" of heaven, which apportions to each his duties and his fate, should be respected by the wise man; obediently and humbly, he should submit thereto and never murmur against heaven. Confucius believed in a governing righteousness in the world-course, which, even if not without exceptions in the cases of individuals, does in the main reward the good and punish the evil. Whether that providence was to be thought a personal one or not, he leaves undecided; he himself preferred the impersonal expression Tien (heaven) to the personal one, "Shang-ti." As a true son of his nation, he considered respectful submission to parents, ancestors and rulers in all the circumstances of life, to be the highest virtue. Yet he demanded of the rulers that they set the example of virtue, that they win the confidence of their people and not burden them unduly, that they seek to better them more by instruction than by punishment. As the conception of what is morally right he designated the golden rule of reciprocity: "What you do not wish that another do unto you, do not unto others." He acknowledged humbly that there were four things which he had never achieved entirely: to serve his father as he would have his son serve him; to serve the prince as he would have his minister serve him;

## The Chinese Religion

to serve his older brother as he would have his younger brother serve him; and to treat his friend as he would have his friend treat him. In addition to the principle of Lâo-tsze, that wrongdoing should be returned by good, Confucius thought: "Where-with shall, then, good be repaid? Rather, return justice for injustice, and good for good."

It is conceivable that soon after his death, Confucius was worshipped by the Chinese as their highest authority, as the sum-total of wisdom and the good genius of their country. Five classical works, which form the permanent basis of Chinese science and world-view, in part, he collected and edited, and in part he wrote. They are, "Yih-king," the book of wisdom; "Shu-king," the book of history, "Shi-king," the book of songs; "Le-ke," the book of religious and worldly customs, and "Chun Tsew," the book of the annals of the Lu district. This last work is about his own native place, and was written by himself. It can no longer be said how far he altered the traditional material, or of how much of it he made use; this much is certain, that the classical books, in the form in which he left them, are the expression of the Chinese ideal, in some measure, as it was handed down to him and more clearly defined by him, and that he impressed it so thoroughly upon his people that their thought and action to-day is governed by it. The most important of his successors was Mengtse (371-288 B.C.), who applied the teachings of Confucius to

## Religion and Historic Faiths

practical governmental life with cleverness and great courage.

Finally, it must be noted that in the year 65 A.D., under the Emperor Mingti, Buddhism was brought to China by Indian missionaries; between the fourth and the sixth centuries, it gained the controlling position, but in such fashion that Taoism and Confucianism remained alongside of it, and forced Buddhism to accommodate itself, in a measure, to them. In China, these three religions are not strictly differentiated; a Chinaman can belong to all three at the same time, and, in fact, he actually does so, by following the principles of Confucius in the acts of his daily life, by employing the magic means of Taoism in extraordinary cases, while for things concerning death and the beyond, he turns to a priest of one of the ten Buddhistic sects for its consolations. Such religious toleration may be admired, but one may be permitted to ask the question whether that very toleration does not betray the unsatisfactoriness of each of these religions? And, whether they are not destined to be set aside for a higher religion?

## VI

### THE EGYPTIAN RELIGION

AS FAR back as the ancients, Egypt was the land of riddles and it has remained so to this day. The civilization of the Egyptians is of so remarkable a nature that it is not easy for us to understand it; it unites, seemingly without mediation, direct opposites. Alongside of one another, we find the awkward hieroglyphic picture-signs and a perfected alphabet script; in the crafts, the most antiquated apparatus of the Stone Age alongside of highly-developed metal-work. So, too, the Egyptian religion is a wondrous mixture of crude, antique legends and customs with high thought almost touching monotheism. Everywhere we find a tenacious conservatism alongside of a hearty, progressive development of civilization. For this reason, the Egyptian is a particularly instructive example of the evolution of religion in its early stages.

Before anything else, due regard must be had for the worship of animals, a fact which struck the ancients as a peculiarity of this religion. Every district had its own peculiar sacred animal; every animal of the species was sacred for the inhabi-



## Religion and Historic Faiths

tants of the district and one specimen was cared for in the temple and worshipped. The bull Apis, at Memphis as the incarnation of the local god Ptah, the bull Mnevis at Heliopolis (local-cult of the sun-god Ra), and the ram at Mendes enjoyed the distinction of general worship; these cults, originally local, became general in the unified empire. In other places the following animals were worshipped as sacred: cat, dog, monkey, crocodile, ranny, sparrow-hawk, ibis, snake, frog, scarab (beetle) and the like. The temple inscriptions of the middle epoch of the empire give no information about this worship of animals; this fact gave rise to the conclusion that the Egyptian worship of animals was not original but a result of the degeneration of the religion in a later period. But Manetho, the historian, expressly testifies to its existence at the time of the Second Dynasty (about 3000 B.C.) and the complete or semi-zoöomorphic representation of the gods throughout corroborate him; thus, Horus was sometimes a sparrow-hawk, and sometimes a man with the head of a sparrow-hawk; Hathor was a woman with a cow's head and horns; Osiris, a man with the head of a bull or ibis; Khem and Amen with a ram's head.

The complete zoöomorphic representation was the older of the two, for the semi-humanization did not begin until the Twelfth Dynasty. Hence, it may safely be concluded, that the Egyptian gods were originally represented as animals. But that can-

## The Egyptian Religion

not possibly be explained as some priestly speculation which simply regarded the animals as "symbols of the nature-powers," and "pantheistic forms of the manifestation of the original god." We ought never to forget that symbolism is never a factor in the oldest religions, but that there everything was meant most really; not until a much later stage of rationalistic reflection does the symbolical interpretation of customs appear, and then they have either lost sanction or their original meaning is no longer understood.

What are we to regard as the original sense of the Egyptian animal-gods? The simplest answer to this question is, without doubt, a comparison to the "totemism" of many Indian and negro tribes, that is, with the widespread custom according to which single social groups believed their peculiarity and difference from others to have been established by descent from a certain species of animal, and that species-spirit, they worshipped as their tribal-god (their "totem"). In Egypt, also, animal-worship belonged, at first, to single districts of the country, which, even after political alliance, through the unification of the empire, maintained their religious separation, one from the other, by their attitude to the same animal, so that the animal held sacred in one district would be regarded as profane in the adjacent district and vice versa. In later times, it was not a rare occurrence that the injuring of the sacred animal of one district, by the

## Religion and Historic Faiths

people of the next district, led to bloody combat. How would such a state of affairs be thinkable if the whole view were nothing more than the symbolic poetizing of priestly speculation? The only explanation is that of a survival of early totemistic faith.

But these animal-gods, which we may regard as the oldest, stand alongside the higher great gods of that phase of the Egyptian religion with which we are acquainted, and concerning which the temple inscriptions give us information. In the first instance, these gods were personified nature-powers: gods of the sun and the moon, of heaven, earth, the underworld, and the Nile; to these must then be added the genies of fruitfulness and of growth, of order, righteousness, truth, knowledge, and the like. I have said that these deities were represented as half-animals in the worship-pictures; but, on the other hand, it must be remembered, as is clearly shown by the myths and the hymns, that they are thought of as human, acting persons; so it seems as though this worship of gods parallels the animal-worship, as though they were two religions, differing entirely in their nature and their origin, and neither one to be explained by the other. Meanwhile, the question arises: Must there not have been some sort of connection between them, which we do not know, merely because it took place in some pre-historic period? We must leave that problem to later research-students.

## The Egyptian Religion

In any event, the high gods were originally local gods too, and by the alliance of the single districts into a united empire they were brought into relation to one another. The oft-recurring connection of three gods into the family group, father, mother and son, is very ancient; such groups are: Osiris, Isis and Horus at Abydos; Ptah, Sechet, and Imhotep at Memphis; Amen, Maut, and Chonsu at Thebes. Then, too, various gods from different localities were fused into one and taken thus into the religion of the realm, as, for example, Amen Ra, Ra-Harmachis, Ptah-Sokar-Osiris and others. Ra was the sun-god of Heliopolis, whom the kings of the Fifth Dynasty (about 2500 B.C.) elevated to his central position in the religion of the realm; about this central god, by the interweaving of political motives and priestly speculation, there developed a sun-theology, which sought to transform most of the local gods into sun-gods by gradual assimilation with Ra. The myths tell of Ra that he was originally a king who ruled in some golden age, but that when he became old and feeble, men grew overbearing and revolted against him; through the goddess Hathor, he made bloody havoc of the rebels, but saved them from entire destruction. Finally, he grew tired of rulership over the thankless and determined to reside only in heaven and establish a new world-order.

May not this myth contain a reminiscence of the religious-historical transformation, by which the

## Religion and Historic Faiths

earthly tribal-god of one of the local ancestor-worships had been elevated to the position of heavenly sun-god at the head of the national pantheon? I suggest the question, merely, and leave the answer to the history of comparative religions (recall the sun-gods of Japan and Peru). Another myth describes Ra's journey across the heavens in his sun-bark, his combat with the dragon Apep, his defeat and descent into the underworld, his return through the land of darkness, in which there are twelve dangerous portals which must be passed through in the twelve hours of the night, and his return into the world of daylight. We will meet this myth again when we discuss the ideas of the fate of souls in the world beyond.

Osiris is usually called the sun-god of Abydos, but, in the second volume of the "Golden Bough," Frazer has proved, on satisfying grounds, that it was not a sun-god originally, but rather a god of vegetation, of the fruitful earth, and of the underworld. The legend is well known in which Osiris is murdered by his inimical brother Set, of the plaint of his wife and sister, Isis, who sought his corpse, and when she found the pieces at last fitted them together, giving them new life, whereupon Osiris became the ruler in the realms of the dead, while, upon earth, his son, Horus, avenged his death, first by a combat with Set, and then, by bringing the matter before the judgment seat of the gods, who, after a formal trial, declared Set to be con-

## The Egyptian Religion

quered, Osiris to be king of the dead, and Horus to be king of the living; and his successors became the kings of Egypt. This myth, of the dying and reviving god, reaches back into the farthest antiquity, and was a common possession of the religions of Asia Minor, Greece and Egypt; naturally, its root is the annual experience of the death of nature in Autumn and its rebirth in the Spring. The myth which grew out of it presents dramatically not only the change of nature-life but also the fate of men with its opposites of life and death, joy and sorrow, fear and hope; that myth was richer in soulful motives and premonitions than others, and, therefore, in the course of time, it became the basis of the mystery-cults, which played such an important part in the history of religion.

The god of Memphis, Ptah, owes the general worship given to him solely to the political importance of Memphis, as the capital of the ancient empire. In the later priestly theology, he became a sun-god and was elevated to the position of world-creator (the Greeks compared him to their Hephaestus) but, originally, he was no more than a god of earthly fruitfulness; the bull, Apis, who was lodged next to the Ptah-temple, was looked upon as his son or "second life," which means as much as to say that the god Ptah was, in the beginning, no more than the totemistic bull-god of Memphis.

Amen, the local god of Thebes in Upper Egypt, was originally a god of fruitfulness, of the earth,

## Religion and Historic Faiths

and of the dead; that is, he was to Upper Egypt what Osiris was to Lower Egypt. In the new empire, however, whose first dynasties came from Thebes, Amen was fused for political reasons with the former highest god of the empire, Ra, and they became one divine person; this Amen-Ra was from that time on the highest god of Egypt, the sun-god par excellence, who was extolled as the creator and the preserver of the whole world. In the elevation of this god to heavenly kingship, the counterpart of the kingship on earth, brought about as much by political motives as religious speculation, Egyptian theology approaches monotheism. Concerning Amen-Ra, one hymn, which I take from Erman's translation (*Die Aegyptische Religion*, S. 62.), reads as follows:

"He it is, who has made all, the one with many hands. He commanded and the gods came into being; he is the father of the gods, he it is, who made men and created the animals. Men came forth out of his eyes and gods out of his mouth. He it is, who creates pasture for the herds and the fruit-tree for men, who creates nourishment for the fish in the river and the birds beneath the heavens. For his sake, the Nile comes, and when he, the much-beloved comes, men live. And the head of the gods is friendly of heart, when he is called upon. He protects the timid against the bold. Therefore do all things, as far as the heavens and the earth extend, love and worship him. The gods bow before his majesty and magnify their creator; they rejoice when their creator approaches. Praise thee, says every animal; praise thee, says every desert. Thy beauty conquers every heart, the love of thee paralyzes arms and hands, the heart forgets because the eye looks after thee. He is the living lamp, which

## The Egyptian Religion

rises out of the heavenly ocean. In him, do the oppressed set their trust, for he is the Vizier, who will not suffer himself to be bribed."

King Amenophis IV. (1400 B.C.) made one more step toward complete monotheism by elevating Aton to the position of sole god, and attempting to suppress the worship of all the other gods, particularly that of Amen-Ra. Aton really means the sun-pane, but it was intended merely as the form in which the living personal god behind it manifested himself. A powerful impression of the depth and heartiness of this belief in God is afforded by the following hymn (Erman, S. 68):

"How much there is which thou hast made. Thou didst create the earth according to thy wish, thou alone, with men and with all animals. The foreign lands of Syria and Ethiopia and the land of Egypt—each one didst thou set in its place and create what it had need of; each one has his own possession and the duration of his life was reckoned. Their tongues are separated by their languages and their externals according to their color; Differentiator, thou didst differentiate the peoples. Thou didst create the Nile in the depth and dost lead him hither at thy pleasure to give nourishment to men. Thou didst create the life-nourishment of all distant lands and didst set a Nile in heaven that it may flow down to them; he forms waves upon the mountains like an ocean and moistens their fields. How beautiful are thy decrees, thou lord of eternity. The Nile of heaven didst thou give over to the strange peoples and the animals of the desert, but the Nile from the depth comes for Egypt. Thou didst create the seasons, in order to preserve all thy creatures, the winter to cool them and the glow that they may taste thee. The distant heaven thou didst create in order to shine upon it, in order to see all thy creatures, alone and rising in thy



## Religion and Historic Faiths

form as living sun, shining forth, radiant, departing and returning. Thou didst create the earth for them, who in thee alone had their origin, cities and tribes, roads and streams, The eyes of all see thee before them, when thou art the sun of day over the earth."

It is astonishing to see with what freedom the poet of this hymn rises above the limitations of the popular national religion in that he recognizes that the one god had created the various peoples, each with its own peculiarity, and governs strangers as well as Egyptians with like paternal care. These are the thoughts of a king, an enlightened spirit, who sought to burst the narrow bounds of tradition, of ceremonial, and of the guardianship of priests, and sought to free himself and his people so as to enter into a path of freer human thinking and habit. 'Among those about him, and even among the priests, he met with some success and gained adherents; nevertheless, his bold attempt at reformation failed, for his all-too-stormy march met an insurmountable obstacle in the obtuseness of the masses and the reaction of the mighty priesthood of Amen-Ra. Under the successors of Amenophis IV, these priests succeeded in dethroning the heretical dynasty, and were able to eradicate even the name of the hated innovator and of his all-one god, Aton, so thoroughly from the historic monuments of the great sanctuaries that it was not until the excavation of the ruins of Tel-el-Amarna, the residence of the heretic, in our own day, that this

## The Egyptian Religion

remarkable episode in the history of the Egyptian religion came to light again.

Under the kings of the new dynasty, Rameses II and III (13th century B.C.), the kings sought to prop their political power by making close alliance with the ruling priesthood; it was at this time that the national polytheism of Egypt reached its height. All over the land, the old sanctuaries most highly regarded were richly finished and sumptuously fitted up. The ecclesiastical restoration gave official protection to all of the old popular superstitions, particularly animal worship, and even to the great mass of formulæ for exorcism and magic. Simultaneously, the beginnings of decay appeared in a syncretism which tended toward the disintegration of the many popular gods by uniting them into one pantheistic all-deity. With all these changes, only one thing remained constant—the belief in the divinity of the kings as the sons of the sun-god. Even the Ptolmeies, the highly cultured Greek successors to the throne of the Pharaohs, did not disdain to make use of this. Attempts have been made to explain this faith as Byzantinism, but that is hardly correct. How could it have been rooted so deeply in popular consciousness and maintained itself so well? This belief was rather a survival of that early belief in the divine descent of the ruling race as the representative of the entire people, a belief which we meet everywhere in gray antiquity. For those tribes

## Religion and Historic Faiths

attributed to themselves universally a blood relationship with the tribal deity. Therefore, what was originally considered to be true of the tribe collectively was later narrowed into the belief of the special divinity of the kings, and finally of the Roman Emperor as the last heir of the ancient national religions.

Finally, there is the third point in which the Egyptian religion is distinguished,—the worship of the dead. A number of differing views are met here, one alongside the other, and at the outset we must forego every attempt either to mediate or to harmonize one with the other. According to the oldest view, the soul of the deceased perpetually remains attached to the body, hence the Egyptian care for the preservation of the corpse by embalming, and the protection of the same in a safe tomb. The “dwellings for eternity,” as the tombs were called, formed extended cities of the dead, usually located to the west of the cities of the living. The kings used, as their burial places, the colossal pyramids, while the nobles and the wealthy used rock caverns. In every instance, there was a securely-locked grave chamber before which there was an ante-room with a sacrificial table for the worship of the dead. The tomb equipment for the use of the soul beyond consisted of water jugs, chairs, arms, books on magic, a little boat with a crew, and statuettes of male and female servants; many pictures and inscriptions concerning the deeds of

## The Egyptian Religion

the dead adorned the tombs of the kings, and these are the principal source of our knowledge of the history of Egypt. It was the duty of the living to bring gifts for the soul to the grave, and to repeat formulæ on all feast days; the magic power of the formulæ was supposed to bring the joys of earth to the soul in the world beyond. There were also payments made for the regular saying of masses for the dead by the priests. This was customary among the upper classes. All of this is based on the presupposition that the spirit of the deceased, his Ka, lives on in the grave, "the house of the Ka," and depends on the preservation of his body, which requires such nourishment as sacrificial gifts and magic formulæ.

There is another view, that the soul, Ba, moves like a bird, free from the body which it visits from time to time in the grave, but it can also soar to heaven above and change into various beings at pleasure. So, for example, the soul may embody itself in snakes or plants—this is the animistic basis of all the theories of the transmigration of the soul.

Different, again, is the view of the journey of the soul to the world beyond which it undertakes with the sun-god, Ra, in his night-ship through the underworld. This is divided into twelve stations, one for each of the twelve hours of the night, and each of these is guarded by a fearful monster such as the wicked dragon Apep (Apophis). By

## Religion and Historic Faiths

magic formulæ alone are these monsters rendered harmless, and this purpose is served by the books of magic which are always buried with the dead. The world beyond is looked upon throughout as a dark land to the west, which, from time to time during the nocturnal journey of Ra, becomes illumined for the refreshment of the soul. More pleasant is the notion of the paradise (Earu or Aalu) of Osiris, which lies in the north or the east, and is like the blissful fields of the Greek Elysium. There, the souls lead a pleasant life, a continuation of their earthly occupations and joys. But beyond this rises religious hope to the thought of a blissful life for the transfigured soul which, having become one with Osiris, will participate in his divine being or shine as a star in heaven. "As certainly as Osiris lives, he too will live. As certainly as Osiris will not be destroyed, he too will not be destroyed." The gods call out to the soul: "Thy transfigured spirit and thy power come to thee as to the god, the representative of Osiris. Thy soul is in thee and thy power behind thee. Lift thyself up and arise." To him who is thus awakened, they stretch out a ladder for the ascent to heaven: "The gate of heaven is open for thee and the massive bolts shot back. Thou findest Ra standing there, he takes thee by the hand and leads thee to the throne of Osiris, so that thou mayest rule over the transfigured. The servants of the god stand before thee and call out, Come, thou god, come, thou possessor

## The Egyptian Religion

of the throne of Osiris. Now standest thou there protected, equipped as a god, clothed with the form of Osiris, and thou dost what he did do among the transfigured and the indestructible." (Erman, p. 98.)

This bliss, however, is participated in by those alone who have passed through the judgment of the dead before the judgment throne of Osiris. The judgment scene has been preserved for us in a picture: the goddess of truth leads a woman into the hall of judgment, at the other end of which Osiris sits upon his throne as judge of the dead; above, in the background, are the forty-two witnesses of the trial; in the centre a great scale, on one pan the heart of the deceased, and on the other the truth symbolized as a feather. The gods, Horus and Anubis, make the test, whether the heart will not be found too light before truth. And the clerk-god, Thoth, stands behind, with all his writing material, to take down the result and carry his report to the judge. The 125th chapter of the Book of the Dead, that oldest manual of confessions, which at the same time contains a catechism of Egyptian morals, records for us what the soul has to say, and, according to Erman (p. 104 seq.), it is essentially as follows:

"Praised be thou, great god, lord of both truths, I have come to thee that I may behold thy beauty: I know thee and I know the names of the forty-two gods who are with thee in the hall of both truths, who feed upon them that do wickedly and who drink their blood on the day of reckoning:

## Religion and Historic Faiths

I come to thee and bring the truth and drive off sin. I have committed no sin against men and I have done nothing which is hateful to the gods. I have not spoken evilly of any man, to his superior. I have suffered no one to hunger, I have caused no one to weep, neither have I committed murder nor commanded others to murder. I have caused pain to no man. I have not lessened the food in the temples, neither have I stolen the bread of the gods nor the food of the transfigured. I have not practised unchastity on the pure place of my native god. I have not falsified the measure of corn, nor the measure of length, nor the field measure, nor the weight of the scales. I have not stolen the milk from the mouth of the infant, nor have I stolen the cattle from the pasture, nor have I caught the birds and fishes of the gods. The waters of the inundation have I not hemmed. I have not interfered with the temple income of the god. I have not been eavesdropping. I have not committed adultery. I was not deaf to words of truth. I have not eaten up my heart with affliction. I have not been disdainful nor have I made many words. I have not blasphemed the king nor have I despised the god. Behold, I come to you without sin. I have done that which men say is satisfactory to the gods. I have given bread to the hungry, drink to the thirsty, raiment to the naked, and ferriage to him without a boat. I have been a father to the orphan, a husband to the widow, a shelter to the freezing. I am one who (only) has spoken and narrated good. I have gained my possessions by righteous means. I have given sacrifices to the gods and gifts to the transfigured dead. Save me, protect me. Ye will not accuse me before the great god. I am one of a clean mouth and of clean hands, to whom those who see him say welcome."

Thus, the Book of the Dead pictures, in the form of a confession of the soul before the seat of divine judgment, the moral ideal of an Egyptian who has honestly fulfilled his duties toward the gods and men. We must not be surprised that ritual and

## The Egyptian Religion

moral duties are indiscriminately mixed together; in the priests' law-books of all religions, it is not otherwise—think of the laws of Moses, the Indian law of Manu, the Persian Avesta, and the others. In any event, we may form this judgment, that, in consideration of its great antiquity, the moral ideal contained in the Egyptian Book of the Dead is one deserving of our highest respect. Thus, from this side, too, we find confirmation of the fact that the Egyptian religion was not poor in noble seeds of truth; naturally, they could not come to pure and powerful development because the all-too-conservative character of the people ever held tenaciously to the old, naturalistic notions and customs, despite the attempts at betterment; and the double pressure of priestly hierarchy and political despotism made the elevation to free human culture and civilization most difficult.



## VII

### THE BABYLONIAN RELIGION

THIS religion may be followed back even further than the Egyptian. Its oldest historical documents extend back to the beginning of the fourth millennium B.C. According to the opinion of the learned Assyriologist, Bezold, it would be arrogant, at the present day, to attempt to tell the history of this religion. Much as we have to be thankful to the industry and keenness of those learned men who have busied themselves for more than a half-century with the decipherment of cuneiform inscriptions, and valuable as are the finds which have resulted from the excavations in the ruins of the cities of Mesopotamia and are ever being made, we are still far from any positive knowledge concerning the origins of the Babylonian religion in pre-Semitic and Semitic roots, and its changes in the course of time. This much, however, may be accepted as certain: in the Babylonian, as in the Egyptian religion, a worship of various local deities of single districts and cities of the valley of the Euphrates and the Tigris, was fundamental. The combination of these deities into one polytheistic

## The Babylonian Religion

system is not at the beginning, but is the work of schools of priests which had been begun in the old monarchy and completed later, particularly after the union of upper and lower Babylon into the one kingdom ruled by Hammurabi (about 2250 B.C.).

In this religion of a realm, again, we meet at the outset, as in Egypt, several triads. The highest of these, Anu, Bel, and Hoa, had been systematized in the old monarchy of Ur so that Anu ruled over heaven, Bel over the earth, and Hoa over the sea. That was an artificial division, for originally the three existed independently alongside of one another, each one being the supreme power within the boundaries of his worship. Hoa, as the local deity of Eribu, was probably a totemistic fish-god, the "Oannes" of Berosus, who later became the god of depth, then of deep wisdom, of oracles and formulæ of exorcism. Another triad was Sin, the moon-god, with his two children, Shamash, the sun, and Istar, the great mother of all living, the goddess of fertility and of love, and also of death and war (particularly the latter in Assyria). Later, I will speak of the myth which tells of her journey to hell. I wish to remark here, that, instead of Istar, Ramman is also mentioned as the third member of this triad. He is the lightning and rain god native in Assyria, who was later brought into connection with the sun in Hammurabi's religion of the realm. It must be remarked further that the Babylonian wisdom of the priests artificially combined the exist-

## Religion and Historic Faiths

ing popular deities with the stars, a combination which certainly was strange to the popular consciousness—for what people is ever well versed in astronomy? It is a gross error, therefore, to think that Istar was really the planet Venus, and that the myth of her descent to hell was related to the disappearance and appearance of the evening and the morning star. Such poetic interpretations, whether they be old or new, do not correspond to the original sense and deep seriousness of earliest religious beliefs. The fact is, rather, that the astrological wisdom of the priests established a mystical relation not closely definable between the five planets and the popular deities; these became half-way identical so that the god of war and of death, Nergal, was the reddish planet, Mars; Nabu, the god of revelation and of priests, was the planet, Mercury; Marduk, the king's god, was the imperial planet, Jupiter; Istar, the goddess of love, was the lovely evening star, Venus, and, finally, Ninib, the god of storms and of war, was the planet Saturn. These five planetary deities, together with the sun and the moon, ruled the seven days of the week, which the Romans took over from the Babylonians and transmitted to the Occident.

From the time of the founding of the empire by Hammurabi, Marduk, the local deity of Babel, capital city of the realm, was elevated to the dignity of the highest god of the realm just as Amen-Ra had been elevated in the new Egyptian empire. This

## The Babylonian Religion

primacy of Marduk, resting primarily on a political basis, was ecclesiastically sanctioned by the priesthood of Babel in that they converted the spring-new-year festival, Zalmuku, into a festival of victory of Marduk; the spring hymn, singing the annual victory of the sun over the storm season and winter rains, was developed into an epic of creation in which the principal rôle of creator and victor over chaos was assigned to Marduk, the god of Babel.

This creation epic has an especial interest for us, inasmuch as there are certain points of contact between it and the story of creation told in the first chapter of the Bible. The myth begins: In the beginning there was neither heaven nor earth nor a single god, but only the waters of the ocean and Tiamat, the dragon of chaos (the biblical Tehom); by a combination of them the first god-pairs, and then the great gods and Marduk came into being. Now Tiamat, who saw her power jeopardized by them, challenged these gods to combat and then began the decisive struggle between the divine government of the world and the elemental chaos similar to the struggle between titans and giants against the Olympians in Greek mythology. But one after the other of the older gods attempted in vain to resist the fearful monster; in their dire need, they concluded to select Marduk as their champion and conveyed to him their combined power. "Henceforward be thy power unbounded; in thy hand be it to lift up and to make low; nothing can resist thy

## Religion and Historic Faiths

command; among the gods not one can withdraw from thy rulership." Upon this condition, Marduk accepts the decision of the gods, arms himself with a sword, a spear and a net, creates a destructive wind which he blows into the mouth of Tiamat, who had opened it in order to get air; then Marduk pierces her body and divides it into two halves, one of which he converts into the vault of heaven, as a receptacle for the upper waters, and locks it tight with bolts. Thereupon, he sets bounds for the lower waters and strides through the heavens as a victorious ruler. In the heavens, he marks the stations of the single gods (the stars), while he makes the moon the night light to designate the days (of the month). Finally, he creates men, but how they were created cannot be seen from the epic. The epic closes with this warning: "The fear of god produces benevolence. Sacrifice lengthens life, and prayer wipes away sin,"—practically the essence of the Marduk faith. (After Jastrow, *die Babyl. und Assyr. Religion*, Cap. XXI.)

While the points of contact between this epic and the biblical story of creation cannot be overlooked, equally certain is it that the difference between them is greater than their relationship, so that a direct borrowing can scarcely be accepted; much more probable is the hypothesis of common Semitic sagas out of which the Babylonian priests, on the one hand, created their polytheistic epic of the struggle and the victory of the gods, while on the other hand,

## The Babylonian Religion

the Hebrew poet composed the sublime picture of a struggle-free creation by one all-powerful creating god. Much closer is the relationship of the Babylonian and the biblical legends which tell the story of the Deluge; in the Babylonian version the hero's name is Sit-Napistim (Xisuthros). The god Hoa confides to him that the other gods, angered by men's sins, had decided upon their destruction by a deluge of waters. Acting upon the advice of his protecting deity, he builds the ark and loads it with all his possessions and with animals of every kind. The deluge comes simultaneously from heaven and from the sea. The gods themselves, in anxiety and terror, flee before its rage. After seven days, the ark rests securely on Mt. Nisir. First Sit-Napistim sends forth a dove which returns; then a swallow, but she too finds no dry ground and returns; finally a raven, which returns nevermore. Sit-Napistim then abandons his ship and on the summit of the mountain offers up a sacrifice of thanksgiving, upon which the gods fall like flies. Old Bel, alone, is angry that all men have not been destroyed, while Istar mourns that so many living beings have died; excited quarrels occur at all the meetings of the gods, until Ea succeeds in pacifying the combatants. Thereupon they are reconciled to the human beings that have been saved and transport Sit-Napistim to the paradise of the blest.

This conclusion of the Babylonian legend is reminiscent of the biblical translation of pious

## Religion and Historic Faiths

Enoch; it seems, therefore, as though in the Babylonian story Sit-Napistim combines in one single figure the two heroes, Noah and Enoch, of old Semitic story.

The biblical story of paradise, in a measure, recalls the myth of the hero, Adapa, that son of Hoa, who had broken the wings of the south wind and thereby brought upon himself the anger of the god Anu. The latter orders this hero to appear before his throne and answer the charge of arrogant invasion of the divine rulership of the world. Hoa dismisses his son with the advice that he do not partake of the food or drink that will be offered to him in the hall of the gods, for it is his death-meal. Adapa departs clad in the garb of mourning and, by the mediation of the other gods, succeeds in pacifying the angry Anu. Inasmuch, however, as he has seen secrets of heaven never shown to mortals, the gods decide to offer him the bread of life and the drink of life, and to make him one of themselves. But Adapa, remembering the paternal advice, refuses the proffered food, whereupon Anu looks on him in sorrow and asks: "Why dost thou thus? Now thou canst not live [forever]." Thus Adapa has lost the possibility of immortal life with the gods through his incredulity, and must return to earth.

Here, then, as in the biblical story, immortality depends upon the eating of the food of life, and here, as there, it is lost by the fateful obedience to bad counsel. In the Bible, it is the demonic counsel

## The Babylonian Religion

of the snake which causes the doubt and disobedience of the divine command, while in the Babylonian legend, it is the deceptive counsel of the god himself which seals the fate of the obedient man. Thus we see again how common Semitic legends are worked out in entirely different senses on two sides.

Finally, the myth of Istar's journey to hell, peculiar to the Babylonians, must be mentioned. In order to fetch the water of life for the revivification of her dead lover, Tammuz, the goddess descends into the nether world, the "land without return." Through seven doors, all locked and guarded, she must pass. At the first, she demands admission in commanding tones, threatening to destroy the portals of the nether world and lead up all the dead. The guardian announces this to the mistress of the underworld, who commands that Istar be permitted to pass, but only according to the laws of the nether world. Accordingly, at each gate, one piece of jewelry or one garment after the other is taken from her. Naked, she appears before the goddess of death and the latter commands her demons to inflict upon Istar all of their diseases. The disappearance of the goddess of love from earth has this consequence: all conception and reproduction of men and cattle seems about to cease, and a general dying-off is imminent. Then the higher gods must bring their help. They send their messenger, Assusunamir, to the queen of the nether world with the strict command that Istar be suffered to depart



## Religion and Historic Faiths

unhurt. Reluctantly, the mistress of death bows before the command of the gods and permits the sick goddess to be sprayed with the waters of life; thus healed, she begins her return journey, recovers her garments and her jewelry at each of the seven gates, and emerges into the upper world with all her old-time glory. Thereupon she brings her lover, Tammuz, back to life with the waters of life. A general festival of joy, with music and song, follows: the counterpart of the spring festival of Adonis and Astarte in Syria, of the Osiris and Isis festival in Egypt, and of the Demeter and Kore festival in Greece.

Better even than all these myths, the hymns and penitential psalms which have become known to us through the decipherment of the cuneiform inscriptions serve to characterize the Babylonian religion. I will give you a few of these as they have been translated by Jastrow and Zimmern. A prayer of King Nebuchadnezzar to Marduk:

"O, Eternal Ruler, lord of all, grant that the name of the king whom thou lovest, whose name thou hast named (called to the throne) may flourish as it seems good to thee. Lead him along the right path. I am the ruler who obeys thee, the creation of thy hand. Thou hast created me and hast entrusted me with the rulership over men. According to thy mercy, which thou grantest to all, O Lord, let me love thy highest law. Plant in my heart the fear of thy divinity. Grant me all that may seem good to thee, for thou art he who guards my life."

A prayer to Istar:

## The Babylonian Religion

"It is good to pray to thee, for thou art inclined to listen. Thy glance is a hearing of prayer, thy utterance light. Have mercy upon me, Istar, proclaim my welfare. Faithfully look upon me. Harken to my beseeching. If I follow thy footsteps, be my progress sure. If I seize thy cord, may I possess joyousness. If I bear thy yoke, relieve me of my burdens. If I have regard to thy glance, may my prayer be heard and granted. If I seek thy rulership, may life and salvation be my portion. May the good protecting spirit which stands before thee be mine, may I achieve the prosperity, which stand to thy right hand and to thy left. Speak thou that my speech be heard. In health and joyousness lead me daily. Make my days long, give me life. May I be healthy and uninjured, that I may worship thy divinity. As I wish, may I achieve. The heavens rejoice in thee, the deeps of the waters shout with joy to thee. May the gods of all render homage to thee. May the great gods rejoice thy heart."

A penitential prayer to Istar, with incidental words of the mediating priest:

"'I, thy slave, full of sighs, cry to thee. Accept thou the fervent prayer of him who has sinned. When thou lookest with mercy upon man, that man lives. O, almighty mistress of man, merciful, turning in goodness toward them, she hearkens to supplications.' The priest says: 'His god and his goddess are angry at him, therefore he calls upon thee. Turn thy countenance toward him. Take him by his hand. Outside of thee there is no god to set aright.' The penitent says: 'Look upon me truly, accept my supplication. How long yet, say, ere thy spirit will be milder. How long yet, my mistress, will thy countenance be turned away. I coo like a dove, with sighs am I filled.' The priest says: 'With woe and mourning is his soul full of sighs, tears he weeps and breaks forth in lamentations.'"

A penitential prayer for any god:

"O, Lord, my sins are many, great are my transgressions. know not the sin which I have committed, nor do I know the

## Religion and Historic Faiths

transgression. The god whom I know, whom I do not know, hath oppressed me; the goddess whom I know, whom I do not know, hath caused me pain. When I sought help, no one took me by the hand. When I wept, no one came to my side. How long, my god, my goddess, will thy anger not cease and thy unfriendly heart not find rest? O Lord, despise not thy slave. Cast into the waters of the marsh, take him by the hand. Turn the sin which I have committed to good and make the wind to carry off my transgression. Disrobe me of my many trespasses as of a garment. My god, my goddess, though my sins be seven times seven, forgive my sins. Forgive them, and I will bow down before thee. Let thy heart come to rest as the heart of the mother who bore me, of the father who begot me."

Recently, these penitential psalms have been somewhat overrated, because they have been regarded as fully equal to those of the Bible. At bottom, they contain nothing more than the lively desire to be freed from the evil which has befallen the one praying. That this evil is brought into connection with a guilt which has excited the anger of the god does show a movement of the moral conscience in combination with the religious feeling of dependence, but it is never actually a matter of salvation from the sin itself, but only from its evil consequences; there is no trace of moral self-searching or self-judgment, of a demand for inner betterment and purification. So it might be said that these penitential prayers do not essentially go beyond the realm of polytheistic nature-religion. This judgment is the more justified when we recall how closely these prayers are related to and go over into the magical formulæ of exorcism which play a larger part in the Baby-

## The Babylonian Religion

lonian religion than anywhere else, because they stand in closest relation to the astrological belief in fate, systematized by the priests. In all other religions, naturally, the superstitious belief in omens and magic means is to be found, but only as a popular sub-structure of the official religion, which from its higher standpoint rejects such naturalistic survivals of a crude past. However, the superstitious belief in soothsaying and magic was an essential part of the priestly religion itself among the Babylonians, and the main obstacle to its elevation to higher ideals.

The Babylonian priests had busied themselves early with astrological studies, but they had never achieved such extent of astronomical knowledge as is to be found among the Greek natural philosophers. Instead of observing the movements of the heavenly bodies in the interest of pure knowledge, they used their observations in order to make an arbitrary connection with the fates of men, and so they became the discoverers of that astrological pseudo-science, the delusion which weighed humanity down for so long a time. In their official reports, there are capital examples of the arbitrary fashion in which the astrologers made oracles out of the phenomena of the heavens. Once we read: Because sun and moon are visible at the same time on such and such a day, the gods will be favorably inclined to the land, the people peaceable, the army obedient, and the cattle safe in their pasture: another time, exactly the

## Religion and Historic Faiths

same position of sun and moon leads to the conclusion that a gloomy period awaits the land, a strong enemy will destroy it, and the king will be forced into subjection. An eclipse of the moon on such and such a day of the month portends the death of an inimical king. On another day, it means an imminent war; on a third day, an inundation; on a fourth, famine; on a fifth, miscarriages and the like. The astrological calendar determined accurately for each day of the month, on the basis of the position of the planets with regard to one another and to other stars, for what action, particularly of the king, it was favorable or unfavorable. It is apparent what an immense power the priesthood was able to exercise by the supposed knowledge of the decisions of heaven concerning earthly life, governmental and private. Was not Paul right when he characterized heathenism as "the slavery under the poor and weak world elements"? But the other side of this spiritual unfreedom was the false freedom of magic, which seeks to force the spiritual powers into the service of human discretion by means of exorcistic formulæ.

Perhaps one may say that it is just this double superstition, on the one side fate determined by signs in heaven and on earth, on the other, the witchcraft served by mysterious powers, which is characteristic of the weakness of nature-religion generally. On the one hand, man remains caught in slavish fear of fate's dark decree, and on the

## The Babylonian Religion

other hand, he thinks that he is able to elevate his own wild caprice and arbitrariness to be mistress over the world. Now bold, now humble, his heart is never at rest, as it can only be in the free surrender to the divine will of the good. Man had to tear himself loose from the bonds of nature and magic; he had to learn that the revelation of God was to be sought not only outside of himself in nature, but also and especially within himself. "In thy breast are the stars of thy fate." When man began to turn his gaze inward, he found, in the voice of his own conscience, in the feeling of his own heart for a noble human ideal, that revelation of God which is more than a mere nature power, which is the holy will of the good and which will elevate man through obedience to the freedom of the individual spirit. Therewith, we stand before the decisive turn in the history of religion, the turn from nature to spirit. This change, however, could only be brought about everywhere by single enlightened spirits who felt the god in their own breast stronger and recognized it more clearly than the masses about them. They were the seers through whose seeing, and the prophets and the wise men through whose teachings, the new beginnings of a higher ethical stage of development of religion went forth. From this time on, our discussion will deal with these prophetic or historical religions, and we will begin with that of Zarathustra.

## VIII

### THE RELIGION OF ZARATHUSTRA AND THE MITHRA CULT

AS IN the cases of other religious heroes, the life of Zarathustra is richly embellished by legends. Before his birth the future greatness of her son was revealed to his mother in dreams. Immediately after his birth, it is said, he laughed—characteristic of his later courageous optimism. As a child, inimical spirits sought to trap him, but in vain. As a youth, he withdrew from the world, and in his thirtieth year, on a solitary mountain, he had his first vision: he felt himself elevated to a place before the throne of God and from God himself heard the revelation of the true religion and the call to be prophet of the true God. Soon thereafter, a demon sought to kill him, but a word of the prophet forced him to retire powerless. Then the highest of the devils, Ahriman, approached him with tempting insinuations: "Forswear the good law of God and, by my grace, I will elevate thee to the kingly power." But Zarathustra answered: "No, I will not forswear the law of God, though my body, life and spirit disintegrate."

## The Religion of Zarathustra

On the basis of the similarities between these legends and those told of other heroes, the conclusion has been drawn that Zarathustra was not a historical person but a mythical figure. But, uncertain as the traditions are,—concerning the period of his appearance, the suppositions vary from the fourteenth to the seventh century B.C.—there can be scarcely any doubt that Zarathustra was a character of history. In the Gathas, the oldest portion of the Avesta, the sacred writings of the Persians, his person and those about him appear in clear outlines. He was a priest of the race of Spitam, and stood in close connection with the court of King Vistaspa; the latter and his wife and his highest officers were among the earliest followers of Zarathustra. One of the latter became his father-in-law; we learn of his sons and daughters, and a wedding song which he composed for the wedding feast of one of his daughters is extant. Besides these single features, the hymns of the Gathas furnish us with a detailed picture of the civilization of the people and contemporaries of Zarathustra. The Indo-Germanic tribes which lived in East Iran or Bactria, between the Hindu-Kush Mountains and the Caspian Sea, were, at that time, mainly settled farmers and cattle-raisers; by dint of hard work, they won their nourishment from the rough soil and the raw climate. They were ever in fear of the marauding expeditions of their nomadic neighbors, expeditions which often burst in upon the peaceful



## Religion and Historic Faiths

settlement of these peasants, killing the men, the women and the children and dragging off the cattle as booty.

Thus we get a glimpse of a civilization that is just beginning, one which must defend itself against surrounding barbarians and maintain its existence with difficulty. Under the leadership of their "lying priests," and under the protection of their "lying gods," the Dævas, as they are called in the Gathas, these robber hordes undertook their campaigns. These Dævas are the same beings known to us from the oldest songs of the Indian Veda: they are personified nature-powers among whom the demon of intoxication, Soma and Indra, that ruffian who is nearly always drunk, that patron of the knights of the road, played the principal rôle—purely naturalistic gods, entirely unethical beings, comparable to the Baalim of Canaan. Under the protection of such gods, the nomadic hordes undertook their plundering expeditions against the peaceful settlements of the peasants of Iran in whose midst Zarathustra lived. Ever louder rose the cries of the oppressed for help, cries for a protector on earth and in heaven. The earthly protector appeared in the person of King Vistaspa, who at this time probably established his kingly rule through his protection of the peaceful peasants against the robber bands. The priest Zarathustra allied himself to the king, for the oppression of his people struck at his heart and his keen eye saw the

## The Religion of Zarathustra

mighty contrast between those immoral, lying gods of the robbers and the true God, the source of "the best order," the protector of right and peace among a people, in whose name alone victory is to be won and permanent order established. In the Gathas, there is preserved for us a most vivid description of the call of Zarathustra: how the cry of the oppressed peasants pierces the heavens; how the celestial hosts of spirits take counsel at the throne of the highest god, Ahura, as to whom the mission of saving the people shall be confided; how Ahura then chooses Zarathustra and the latter accepts the call, praying that Ahura send him the good spirit and give him the power for the fulfillment of his mission. Well he feels his own weakness as against the magnitude of his task, and well he knows the pain which the opposition of men will bring to him, but in confidence and obedience he bows in submission to the divine will:

"That thou art holy, O all-wise Ruler, I have seen when the best of spirits came to me, when by thy words I first was taught. Whoever gives himself to thee will suffer sorrow at the hands of men, but whatever thou sayest is best, that shall be done. I know why it goes ill with me and I make my complaint to thee. Look thou into it, O Lord, and give me joy, such as a friend offers to a friend."

And then he goes and preaches to the people the God who had revealed himself to him as the only true one, the holy will of the good; of each one, he demands a decision between a faith in his God,

## Religion and Historic Faiths

who alone is salvation, and those lying gods which lead to destruction. That was a situation exactly like the one we know in biblical history when the Prophet Elijah, in the name of Jehovah, rises up against the priests of Baal and demands of the people that they choose between God and the Baalim, and no longer face both ways. Here, as there, it was a matter of the struggle between the naturalistic and the moral idea of God, hence a matter of personal decision of each individual between the true and the false faith. Therewith the faith is no longer a simple, traditional possession and custom of the people, to which each one, whether he will or no, must surrender simply because of his attachment to the tribal group; here, however, faith becomes the personal conviction of the individual, who must choose between the nature-gods, the patrons of arbitrary and crude power, and the true God, the Lord of order and righteousness. Such a choice is a decision of the will, a free disentanglement from the evil powers and a solemn promise to the good spirit, a confession of attachment to his being and his will, a decision to enter his service and coöperate in the work for his good cause.

The religion of Zarathustra gave first expression to its faith in solemn formulæ of confession, and these, at least in sense if not literally, may be traced back to Zarathustra himself: "I speak myself free from the evil spirit and confess myself to be one of the Mazda-faithful." "The will of the Lord is the

## The Religion of Zarathustra

law of righteousness, the reward of heaven is to be hoped for for those works performed in the world for Mazda; Ahura holds him right who supports the poor.” “Righteousness is the best possession; blessed the man whose righteousness is perfect.” A union of the naturalistic and the moral, the two religious view-points, can never be brought about; between these two opposing principles, there can only be perpetual struggle; the resolution of the opposition can only lie in the hoped-for final victory of the good principle over the bad. Thus, as in the case of Elijah, the prophet Zarathustra is full of the liveliest sense of struggle: “Hearken not to the lying priests; hew them down with swords and utterly exterminate them.”

I think that that is the origin of the story of Zarathustra. It was the need of his own people struggling at the very beginning of their civic customs against hordes of barbarians which brought about in the soul of one priest the knowledge of a deep difference between the crude nature-gods and the god of a moral world-order. Thus Zarathustra became the prophet of Ahura Mazda, that is, “the all-wise Lord,” the one creator and preserver of all good and of all possessions in the natural and the moral worlds; the god who is free from all arbitrary notions and whose nature consists in leading the reasonable purpose of life, the good, to its victory.

• “As the first one,” prays Zarathustra, “I have recognized thee, as the sublime in my spirit, as the

## Religion and Historic Faiths

father of the good spirit, the true creator of the good, the ruler of the world and of all action." And Ahura answers him: "Guardian am I and creator, preserver am I and all-knowing, and I am the holiest spirit—these are my names."

A practical monotheism is here attained, one which is not lowered by the fact that hosts of higher and lower spirits surround the throne of this god, who, like the biblical angels, are servants of his will. Foremost among these are the six Amescha Spenta, that is, immortal helpers; on the one side, these are personified religious conceptions, such as "the best order," "the good thought," "the desired justice," "the perfect wisdom," "the immortality," at the same time, they are the genies and patrons of earthly things, such as earth, metals, cattle and plants. In the second circle about Ahura come the Yazatas, that is the venerables; among them we find the various old popular gods: the genius of fire, as the speediest of the sons of God, then Mithra, the old Indo-Germanic god of light, who now became the mediator between God and man, the leader of souls and the judge in the world beyond; this latter attribute belongs also to Sraoscha, the genius of obedience. Beside these, in the later priestly system which arranged this celestial hierarchy altogether, several spirits of historical heroes and saints, particularly Zarathustra, were admitted. Finally a third circle, the Fravaschis; in reality this is the circle of the souls of men in general, then, more particularly, the

## The Religion of Zarathustra

protective spirits of the pious, forming the active army of Ahura in his great world-struggle. Although Ahura is holy, omniscient and omnipresent, he is not omnipotent because his power is hemmed by the "inimical spirit" Angromainyu (Ahriman). This Persian devil is the spirit of darkness and of death, just as Ahura Mazda is that of light and of life. He is called the foolish and the blind who acts first and thinks afterward, in other words, he whose actions originate in chance and lack reason. He is the personification of everything irrational, injudicious, destructive, of all the evils in nature and the wickedness in humanity. He is no creature of Ahura, but he is not as eternal; he is not an independent creator, but only a destroyer of the good creation of Ahura. He is the cause of all actual, present evil in the world, but the question wherein the cause of him is to be found remains unanswered, just as in the case of the biblical devil.

One may call this a dualistic world-view, in so far as the actual world is divided between the government of a good god and of his wicked counterpart, but this dualism is not absolute, for as this evil spirit was not from the beginning, so he will not remain to eternity. The solution of the great world-riddle, How is the evil in god's creation to be explained? is not sought in theoretical speculation, but rather is found in a religious-teleological conception of the events in the world's history. Evil and sin are here, they must be reckoned with in the

## Religion and Historic Faiths

actual world, but they ought not to remain here, they ought to be struggled against unceasingly, and they will not remain here for the great world-struggle will one day end with the absolute victory of the good and the utter rout of the bad. The dualism of these two opposing principles holds only of the present world of time, but it had not yet been in that prehistorical world of pure spirits, and at the end of the world period of six thousand years, filled with that struggle whose central and turning point is the revelation of Zarathustra, it will not be. As his word of truth is now the victorious weapon of the champion of God against the powers of falsehood and of death, so three thousand years after him the miraculously-born savior, Saoshyant, of his seed, will appear somewhat like his returning alter-ego and waken all the dead to life. Then will the immense world-fire melt all the elements, and in that heat will all the pious painlessly be purified, the wicked punished by three days of torture, but not destroyed, for they too emerge from the fire purified, while Ahriman and his demons alone will, in one last decisive struggle with the heavenly hosts, suffer defeat and be forever exterminated. In this new world, then, begins an endless, blissful life of purified creatures under the sole rulership of the good god, Ahura Mazda.

True, this description of the end of all things occurs in a later writer, the "Bundehesch," but the underlying thought of a present world-struggle be-

## The Religion of Zarathustra

tween the two opposing powers, and of the final victory of the good god and his host, dates back, doubtlessly, to Zarathustra himself. That thought is the kernel of his religion, which, begotten itself by inner and outer struggles and needs, recognizes the struggle in God's cause as the task of human living; at the same time, it is the guarantee of the hope of the victory of the courageous champions who believe in the government of the good God.

Not only concerning the end of all things in the world, but also concerning the fate of individual souls in the world beyond, the religion of Zarathustra busied itself with meaningful thoughts. According to the twenty-second Jasht, the soul of the pious one remains in the neighborhood of the body for three days after his decease, but even during this time there is the premonition of the coming joys of paradise. Then the soul arrives at Tschinwat, the celestial bridge where judgment is rendered. The genius of righteousness holds the scales in his hand; the good deeds and the bad deeds are placed in the pans and weighed without respect to persons. If the good deeds weigh heavier, the soul may pass over the bridge. A whiff of paradisaic incense greets the soul and a blooming maiden appears, saying: "I am thy own doings, the embodiment of thy good thoughts, words and works, thy pious faith." Then, accompanied by Mithra, the soul enters into the threefold paradise of good thoughts, words, and works, and finally into Ahura's world of light, the



## Religion and Historic Faiths

world of the good spirits. The souls of the godless, on the other hand, are dragged by the demon of death into the threefold hell and finally into the gloomy abode of Ahriman.

There is no doubt that here older notions of Indo-Germanic animism are underlying, but in the religion of Zarathustra, they have been worked over in the sense of their moral fundamental thought, that each individual is responsible not only for the righteousness of his own action, but also for the truthfulness of his speech and for the purity of his thought.

Looking for a moment at the ethics of the religion of Zarathustra, we must distinguish between the original sound principles and the later mutilations through the mass of petty observances. As was said before, Zarathustra recognized that the task of man consisted in an active alliance with the good God in order to aid the cause of the good and to fight against all the destructive powers of evil. Inasmuch as all healthy living, growing and flourishing, in the world of nature and of man, belongs to the realm of Ahura and serves his cause, it is the duty of the pious not to hem life by ascetic practice, but to aid it by industrious employment of every power in the work of civilization. The work of raising cattle and of tilling the soil was looked upon as particularly deserving religious performance; "Who sows corn, sows holiness," for the fruitful earth belongs to Ahura and the barren earth to the demons. So, too, a healthy family life in which

## The Religion of Zarathustra

many children are born and brought up to be thorough men and women, was a religious obligation; illegitimate practices were frowned upon and unnatural enjoyments were sins unforgivable, truly the work of the devil. Alongside of purity of body and of soul, of temperance and industry, which make personal life sound and thorough, the social virtues most highly praised were truthfulness, fidelity, and righteousness, beneficence and benevolence. The principal blasphemies which were condemned were lying and cheating, violation of oaths, contraction of debts (because it could never pass off without lying), greed and hard-heartedness. Truthfulness and fidelity were the two qualities of those Persian believers in the Zarathustra faith which struck the Greeks as especially praiseworthy. However, this sound ethics was badly deformed by the ritualistic law code of the priests as we know it in the "Vendidad," the priests' laws of the Avesta, which bears the same relation to the ancient Gathas that the priestly law in the books of Moses does to the prophets and the psalms.

Merely as an example, I will cite some of this senseless casuistry. In order that none of the sacred elements be defiled, the burial or the burning of the dead was avoided, hence the corpses were exposed on hills or towers to be eaten up by wild animals or birds; this horrible practice was probably taken over from the Scythians. The ritual nonsense was mainly elaborated by the medium

## Religion and Historic Faiths

priests, the "magi." There were endless injunctions as to how one must act in case he or she involuntarily became unclean by physical functions or conditions, or by contact with an unclean thing, particularly a dead body; for every such defilement, even of the most harmless kind, there was a ceremonial process of purification and atonement, whereto it was necessary to call the priests and they—this being the heart of the matter—were to be well paid; in case of the refusal of such atonement a certain number of lashes were substituted and the number of these for each of the different misdemeanors can only be understood as the spawning of some mad priestly fantasy. Enough of these signs of a sad degeneration which that originally pure and sound religion and ethics of Zarathustra suffered at the hands of the Oriental priest-schools.

I will not detail the varying fortunes of the religion of Zarathustra from the time when it became the state religion of the Persian realm and underwent all its political changes, to the day when it succumbed to the assault of Mohammedanism. Yet I would call your attention to the Mithra cult, which grew out of the Persian religion and played an important rôle as the rival of Christianity in the first century of our era, in the Roman Empire. As far back as the Avesta, Mithra, the old Indo-Germanic god of light, was one of the semi-divine Yazatas. He is even called the strongest of them, the one whom Ahura makes equally great as him-

## The Religion of Zarathustra

self, the one who is set up as the preserver of the whole world. With the spread of the Persian realm to Babylon and also, later, to hither Asia, there arose a mixture of religion made up of old Iranian beliefs, Babylonian myths, Syrian observances, and finally, even Hellenistic speculation; all of these taken together were the elements of the Mithra religion. It was known to the Romans as early as the days of Pompey in Cilicia and, in the centuries that followed, it spread over the whole Roman Empire, with Rome as its main seat.

The kernel of the faith and forms of worship was Mithra as the "mediator" between heaven and earth. Legend tells of his birth out of a rock and of the adoration of the shepherds in the presence of the young sun-hero. This semi-identification with the sun-god is indicated by the legend which makes him the victor in a struggle with the sun-god, whereupon conqueror and conquered enter into a firm alliance. Best known is the legend of Mithra's sacrifice of the mythical bull, visualized on countless religious reliefs; out of the body of the bull went forth all herbs and plants, especially the corn for bread and wine—a cosmogonic myth of greatest antiquity. It is further narrated that, during a drought, Mithra burst a rock by the shooting of an arrow, and a fountain of water gushed from the fissure, a miracle similar to that told of Moses in the desert. After a last meal, which he celebrates in the company of Helios, the sun-god, and his other comrades of battle, the

## Religion and Historic Faiths

legend makes the hero ascend in a fiery chariot to heaven, where he now dwells with the gods.

Thus, Mithra is the divine messenger and mediator sprung from the deity, who participated in the formation of the world and who constantly preserves the world-order by his combat with its enemies; he is the divine prototype and the powerful assistant of battling humanity, the protector of the good here and their rewarder beyond. He accompanies the souls of his faithful servants upon their dangerous journey through the seven heavenly spaces whose gates open only for those of the sanctified who know the sacred names and formulas. (This will remind you of the Babylonian myth of Istar's journey to hell and the Egyptian myth of the soul's journey with Ra through the nether world.) In each of these heavenly spheres, the soul lays aside that portion of its being which it had received from that particular planetary spirit; finally, freed from all remnants of the earth, the pure soul arrives in the eighth heaven where it is welcomed by the blessed spirits as a son who has returned to his father's home after a long journey. At the end of the world, however, Mithra (here taking the place of the Iranian Saoschyant) will come down again and resurrect men; then will he hold the general judgment, then will the sacrifice of the primeval bull be repeated; and of its fat, mixed with wine, he will prepare the miraculous draught which shall give immortal life to the resurrected.

## The Religion of Zarathustra

upon the new earth. The congregation of the Mithra-faithful had a complete organization; into seven grades of sanctity, they were divided, and these were named "raven," "griffin," "soldier," "lion," "Persian," "sun-runner," "father." The three lowest grades were novices; their position was one of service without the privilege of participation in the sacraments, which privilege belonged only to the upper grades of the lions. At the head stood the fathers, and head among them, "the father of fathers"; he was the grand master of all the sanctified and to him, they all owed respect. Among themselves the comrades of the congregation used the title "brother." Acceptance into the congregation and entrance into the higher grades were marked by various acts of sanctification called "sacraments." Among these was immersion, which (according to the statement of Tertullian, the church father) represented "a picture of the resurrection"; there was also confirmation by marking the forehead of the believer with a mark (it is uncertain whether this was anointment or branding); there was also a sanctification of hands and tongue by honey; finally, the communion of the sacramental meal at which bread and a cup (uncertain whether filled with water or wine) was presented and sanctified by the priest through a recital of sacred formulæ. This holy meal was one partially commemorating the last meal of Mithra before his journey to heaven, and partially a means of assuming divine powers and

## Religion and Historic Faiths

a guarantee of eternal life. In one Mithra liturgy extant, the process of sanctification which brings the believer into community with the god is represented as a symbolic-mystic dying and re-birth by which life is imparted and salvation completed; the sanctified called themselves "reborn for eternity" (*renatus in æternum*). Besides which, the administration of the sacraments was accompanied or introduced by castigations and dramatic scenes of terror which symbolized the struggle with the dark powers of death, whereby the courage of the candidate was tested.

The acts of worship were the priests' concern, and the priests were chosen from the "fathers." The "father of fathers" was also the high priest and exercised a supervision over all the comrades of the cult in a city; there does not seem to have been any uniform church organization taking in all the congregations. The regular service of the priests consisted in a daily prayer, thrice repeated, to the sun, connected with various sacrifices and offerings as well as the singing of hymns with musical accompaniment. There was a special service every week, which took place on Sunday, the day of the sun-god. The principal festival of the year was that of the renascence of the "unconquered sun-god" (the winter solstice from which the sun, that is, the day, grows again); this day was celebrated in every congregation as a sacred festival of joy.

The attractiveness of the Mithra cult is easy to

## The Religion of Zarathustra

understand. The community of brothers gave to each one moral support and strengthened his courage in the struggle for existence, for did they not feel themselves all to be comrades of the army of that god who stands for and aids his brave champions and guarantees blissful life in the world beyond, through the mysterious rites? The mixture of nature-myths with ethical ideas and mystical rites was of a piece with the period of syncretism and of mysteries; the manly martial character, the heritage from their Iranian origin, appealed especially to the Roman legions. Even the favor of the Emperor, sensing a support of the Cæsar cult therein, was not missing. But this very accommodation to the manner of thinking, and the needs of heathen peoples and their ruler, was the weakness of this religious mixture, as against Christianity, which held its moral monotheism pure of all concessions to heathen naturalism and polytheism: not a mythical sun-hero, but a divine-human ideal figure as savior was worshipped by Christianity, and it opened the portals of salvation not only to men, but to all, without distinction, even to women and children. This difference alone sufficed to make it appear necessary that Christianity should win the victory over the Mithra religion which was its rival through three centuries; for how could any religion which excluded the women ever have conquered the world?

I will not enter into a closer comparison of the



## Religion and Historic Faiths

two religions. In some details the parallel must have been apparent to you. It is still a question in dispute among scholars as to how far the historical connections and dependence on the one side or the other, is revealed by them, and we shall do best if we withhold our judgment for the present. Whoever desires greater familiarity with details, I refer to Cumonts's excellent presentation, upon which this brief sketch of the Mithra religion is based.

## IX

### BRAHMANISM AND GAUTAMA BUDDHA

THE Indians were the closest race-relatives of the Iranians about whom I spoke in the last lecture; their religious development, however, was of an entirely different character. In the beginning, during the wandering of the conquering races into the valley of the Indus, the Indians also were a people loving battle and action, loving the world and its pleasures, whereof the old songs of the Rig-Veda give clear testimony. All this changed after they had settled in the exuberant hot valley of the Ganges. The climate was enervating and paralyzing in its effect. Over this people, who once rejoiced in action, there came a weariness, an inclination to rest and contemplation, to dreaming and brooding. There was added to this the increasing strictness of the separation of classes into closed castes: the warrior caste from which emerged the small generations of rulers who exerted a despotic sway; the priest caste who increasingly monopolized the public service of God, developing a complicated and pedantic ritual of sacrificial ceremonies and prayer formulæ and, by combination with the ruling nobles, exerted a paralyzing

## Religion and Historic Faiths

pressure upon the spiritual life of the people. In the life of the Indian people, there were lacking great common purposes and higher ideals which would have lent a valuable content and powerful motives to their acts. The result of that is always a tendency to life-surfeit, to world-weariness and to pessimistic and nihilistic judgment of the world.

Thus it was with the Indians. In many circles, not alone among the priests but even in the warrior caste, there was much brooding over the truth in the popular belief in God. The question was asked: Are not these many gods, after all, only various names for the divine which is one? To the question what this one might be, the philosophers answered: We find it in ourselves, when we disregard anything which is especially personal opinion and wish, and regard only that being which is universally homogeneous, unchangeable and spiritual. This Atman, our innermost self, is one with the self of the world, the world-spirit. But the priests said the highest in the world can only be Brahma, for (according to an old Indo-Germanic notion) prayer and sacrifice have the power to move even the gods as well as to hold heaven and earth together. Then both parties agreed that the power of prayer and the world-soul, the Brahma and the Atman, were finally one and the same divine original being.

The priests then differentiated between this impersonal Bráhma and the personal Brahmá, the highest god, the personification of priestly power

## Brahmanism and Gautama Buddha

and dignity. When the question of the origin of the world out of this divine original being was asked, they answered that all particular beings are emanations from the original being and return again to him, just as the spider has its threads go out of itself and then draws them back into itself, or as the sparks fly up out of the fire and fall back into it. Others, however, thought that because the world-spirit was the only true, simple and unchangeable being, there could be no reality to a world of the many and the changeable; such a world had merely a seeming existence, a dream-picture which the deception of Maya mirrored to our ignorance as though it were reality. That is the same abstract monism or pantheism which we find among the Greek philosophers of the Elëatic school (Xenophanes, Parmenides); such speculation naturally could never become popular anywhere. On the other hand, the naïver notion of the world, as an emanation from Brahma, lent itself as a connecting link with the doctrine of the transmigration of souls rooted in the belief of the people. This doctrine is connected with the ancient and universal animistic notion of the capacity of souls to find new embodiment. While the manner of reincarnation is either arbitrary or accidental in animistic popular faiths, in the Brahmanic system, it is regulated according to the moral law of retribution: every man has had a certain number of lives before his present existence, and everything which he now experiences, either of

## Religion and Historic Faiths

fortune or misfortune, is the fruit of his previous acts in past existences, just as his present merits or faults are the seed out of which, later, there will grow for him a better or a worse existence; for his soul will, in the future, enter into a higher grade of living being (either a more noble caste or a super-human being) or it will descend to one of lower grade, down to the lowest and vilest of animals. According to this, the whole of life is spun in an untearable net of causality, the moral linking of guilt and fate. Inasmuch as this linking reaches out beyond the present life, death itself brings no release; death leads but from the sorrowful present existence into a new and perhaps still more sorrowful one. Thus arises the question about which finally all the poetizing and the thinking of the world-weary Indian turns: How can man tear himself loose from this endless cycle of births with its endless change of ever-new sorrows?

Many sought the solution in stern asceticism, ripping themselves loose from all the life of the world, in a withdrawal to the solitariness of the forest hermit; by suppression and castigation of the body, they hoped to kill it and free the spirit from the sensual world. Others, however, thought this an insufficient means of salvation, beyond which the truly wise man could rise by a knowledge of the all-one being, Brahma, and of the simple seeming, the nothingness of particular existence, even of one's own self; only he who has risen to this height

## Brahmanism and Gautama Buddha

of knowledge is forever released from the cycle of world-whirling. "For him who searching finds all beings in his own self, for him error disappears and all suffering is gone." Even though his external life does last a little while longer, as the potter's wheel still rolls on though it is no longer driven, so for him who is a "self-conqueror," for him who has once pierced the deception of Maya, there is the certainty that after the death of his body, his life-spirits can no more go forth to new births but "he is Brahma then, and into Brahma is he merged." "As streams flow and, disappearing in the ocean, lose their name and form, thus saved from name and form the wise man enters into the one eternal spirit." That is the Brahman salvation, achievable through withdrawal from the world and the acquisition of, philosophic knowledge, naturally possible only to those few who are able to philosophize.

Among the Indians who sought salvation during the sixth century B.C. was a young nobleman (son of a prince?) of the house of Sakyas in Kapilavastu; he who thus appeared was Gautama, with the surname Buddha, meaning the enlightened, and he became the founder of the Indian religion of salvation. Because the story of his life in Indian tradition has such a dense mass of legends growing about it, recent supposition would have it that Gautama was not a person of history, but a mythical sun-hero (Senart, Kern) but that is an exaggerated skepticism. The historical character of Gautama is as

## Religion and Historic Faiths

little to be doubted as that of Jesus, even though naturally, in both cases, that which is historical can scarcely be differentiated in detail from that which has been painted over the original picture by pious story-telling. I will tell you the story of the life of Gautama as it appears in the traditional legendary form, and you will be able to see for yourselves how much is historical and how much is simply legend. I am going to base it mainly on the northern Buddhist biography, "*Lalita-Vistara*," after the French translation of Foucaux: as early as 65 A.D., this book had been translated into Chinese, and therefore, without doubt, had been written before the birth of Jesus and, in any event, before the compilation of our Gospels. This is to be noted because of the remarkable points of contact between the Buddhist and the Gospel legends.

The biography of Gautama begins before his birth with his heavenly pre-existence. It tells how the "great man" existing in heaven listened to the urging of the gods and decided to become a savior of men; he would go down to the world of earth and be born of woman. He chose as his mother the pious Queen Maya, the wife of King Suddhodana of Kapilavastu. It is further told that this woman took leave of her husband for a period of time and for the sake of pious practices retired into solitude. Then it occurred that, while adorned with flowers and resting in a grotto, she dreamed that she saw the heavenly Buddha in the shape of

## Brahmanism and Gautama Buddha

a white elephant enter into her body. She told this dream to her husband and he consulted the interpreters of dreams concerning it; the latter answered that either a great prince or a savior of the world was about to be born. Ten months after this dream, the spotless and unspotting Maya gave birth to a son who immediately after his birth cried, with mighty voice: "I am that which is the most sublime and the best in the world, and I will make an end of all suffering." Then came the hosts of the heavenly spirits and greeted the new-born savior; the earth trembled, heavenly lights appeared, the deaf heard and the blind saw, and the pangs ceased for those in hell. At about the same time, the pious Asita, who dwelt as a hermit in the Himalayas, noticed a remarkable sign in heaven, which denoted that a great king had been born as a savior; he came down to Kapilavastu, found the infant in the royal palace, and by the mysterious sign recognized that there had appeared in him "the great man from heaven." This seeing, he wept. When asked the reason of his sorrow, he replied: "This one will teach the law which has virtue for its beginning, middle and end, but I shall not live to see his work of salvation, therefore do I weep." When the boy Gautama grew up he put his teachers to shame by his wonderful knowledge; in his early years he devoted himself to pious contemplation. On one occasion, at a spring festival where the King was wont to sink the first furrow with a golden plow, the boy's



## Religion and Historic Faiths

nurse, while gazing at the spectacle, forgot about the boy, and lost him from her sight. After a long search, his father found him sitting under a fig tree whose shadow remained unmoved from over him during the entire day; round about him sat the wise men, with whom the boy was discussing spiritual things. The father questions him in surprise, and Gautama answers: "My father, put aside the plowing and seek the higher" (seek higher possessions). But then the boy does return to the city with his father, accommodating himself in externals to the customs of his environment, he is inwardly busy with the thoughts of his future mission of salvation. Of the further youth of Gautama only this is told: that he took part in all the joys of the court; that he was the superior of all his comrades in knowledge and arts, and that he won his wife by a victory in the games. When his wife presented him with a son, he is said to have cried out, at his birth: "This is a new and strong bond which I shall have to break." Even now there rested upon him the feeling of the vanity of all this worldly activity. The particular occasion was scarcely necessary by which, according to the legend, his determination to withdraw from the world was settled; the legend says that, while on a pleasure journey, Gautama met successively an old and infirm man, a man stricken with mortal disease, a dead man, and a hermit—at this sight of humanity, Gautama was overcome by the woe of the world.

## Brahmanism and Gautama Buddha

With epic breadth and many a pathetic scene, the legend goes on to describe his execution of the "great decision of renunciation." Parents and friends and wife labored in vain to hold him back, but all their pleading made no impression. In the dead of night, he bade his sleeping wife and child a silent farewell. Mounted on a horse, accompanied by only one servant, he left the city secretly. Soon he sent back the horse and the servant and exchanged his princely garments for a beggar's dress. At first, he followed the studies of two Brahmanic teachers, but their instruction gave him no satisfaction. After two years, he left them and began an independent life as a penitent; thereupon, five other penitents joined with him. During five years, he lived a life of strict asceticism and went so far in self-castigation that he was close on to death. Then he recognized that this, too, was not the right way; he gave up the life of asceticism, he ate and drank again like other human beings and his former comrades and disciples looked upon him as a renegade and deserted him. Thus he stood entirely alone in the world, separated from his family, from his teachers, from his pupils, alone, and with the burning question in his heart: How can I become free from the sorrows of existence? This condition of a lonesome, doubting, seeking and struggling soul is visualized by the legend in dramatic scenes of demonic temptations: Mara, the prince of pleasure and of death, tries by cunning of every kind to divert the saint from his

## Religion and Historic Faiths

path. First, he had the frenzied powers of the elements, the storm-winds and the waters, the fire and the rocks, fall down upon him, but at the feet of Gautama, their weapons changed into garlands of flowers. Then the wicked one tried all his weapons of pleasure. First, he sent his voluptuous daughter to lead the saint astray by her charms, but, shamefacedly, she had to confess that his virtue was unconquerable. Finally, the greatest temptation: Mara promises him the highest earthly power and rulership if, in return, he gives up his unattainable spiritual goal. But Gautama pushes him aside with the words, "Though thou be the lord of pleasure thou art not the lord of truth, the knowledge of which I shall attain despite thee."

Immediately after this temptation, the legend says Gautama experienced the decisive hour of his enlightenment. Under a fig tree, lost in quiet contemplation, the light of knowledge burned within him. He recognized the four fundamental truths upon which salvation rests: (1), All life is suffering, for it is a constant desire that is never stilled, a seeking of what never can be attained, a possession constantly in fear of being lost; (2), The cause of the suffering does not lie outside of us, but within us, in our thirsting for pleasure, for life, for power; (3), Salvation from suffering consists in the suppression of this thirst, of the will to live, in self-conquest, in the "extinction" of desire, Nirvana; and finally, (4), The way to this goal is that holy

## Brahmanism and Gautama Buddha

path of eight parts whose names are "right believing," "right determining," "the right word," "the right deed," "the right striving," "right living," "right remembering," "right abstraction"; we will later see what this means.

Through this revelation, Gautama became the enlightened, the Buddha; now he had the certainty that he had escaped the blissless cycle of constant births to sorrowful existence. He spent fifty days more on the sacred spot where the illumination had come to him. Much in doubt, he weighed carefully whether he should hold the saving truth for himself alone or proclaim it to all men, whose coarse sense, shrouded in the night of earthly activities, would scarce be able to see the deep mysterious truth. Then did the gods themselves approach him and warn him of little courage and of much doubt, that mercy for the woe of men demanded that he proclaim the saving truth; thus emboldened, he decided to teach, before all the people, the way to salvation.

He experienced his first success in Benares where he found his five comrades of the penitential period of his life; they approached him with distrust even now, but they permitted themselves to become converted when he taught them that the life of bodily castigation was just as mistaken as the life of pleasure, but that the right life was the middle path of inner self-conquest built upon the knowledge of those four cardinal truths. Thereupon Buddha

## Religion and Historic Faiths

preached at Benares before all the people and wandered about the entire land (the Province of Magadha) preaching. Everywhere he had great success. Rich and poor, learned Brahmans and simple people from among the mass of the wretched and the heavy-laden, hearkened to his preaching of salvation, and some joined him as disciples while others became his followers. After he had gathered sixty disciples about him, he sent them out one by one, as wandering preachers: "Go forth for the profit of the many, through sympathy for the world, preach the glorious doctrine of a perfect and a pure life."

From among his disciples, legend has selected one exemplary pair called the disciples of the right and of the left, the one superior in wisdom, and the other in miraculous power; also a favorite disciple, Ananda, a relative of Buddha, of whom it is said that he had heard most and best remembered what he had heard. In the circle of the disciples not even Judas was missing; it was Dewadatta whom the wicked one used to insinuate himself into the circle of the disciples and cause the downfall of Buddha. We learn, also, of disputations with Brahman and ascetic opponents, and once when they challenged Buddha to the performance of miracles he made this reply: "I do not teach my pupils that they should perform miracles before the people with supernatural power, but I do teach them this: Live so that ye hide your good works and confess your sins." However, this did not prevent the

## Brahmanism and Gautama Buddha

pious poetry from telling of the most remarkable miracles performed by Buddha in order to shame his enemies,—poetry intended for the edification of the faithful but of no further interest for us.

When in his eightieth year, after forty-five years of activity as a wandering preacher (about 480 B.C.), Buddha felt that his end was near he gathered his disciples about him and admonished them: "Be vigilant unceasingly, walk ever in holiness, determined ever and well-prepared, preserve your spirit! He who wanders ever without swerving, faithful to the word of truth, he makes himself free from birth and death, he forces his way through to the goal of all suffering." He asks of them that they ask him if anything in his teaching still be dark to them. When all of them are silent and Ananda declares that not one of them has the slightest doubt about Buddha's teaching, he speaks his last words: "All that is perishes; with zeal work your salvation." Thereupon Gautama entered into Nirvana, a storm arose and the earth shook in his parting hour, and when his corpse was lifted upon the decorated funeral-pyre, it caught fire and burned of itself.

Even before Buddha died, a great and growing congregation had gathered about him. Why this great success? Answer: He preached differently from those learned in the sacred writings and the ascetics; he did not seek the path of salvation in learned speculations concerning the world-spirit, nor in unnatural self-castigation, but the one thing

## Religion and Historic Faiths

needful for all and possible to all, he held to be the moral self-conquest and the unselfish benevolence toward all, out of which the true knowledge comes of itself. He did not deny the Brahman gods nor give up the doctrine of transmigration of souls, nor do away with the differences of caste, but he did render valueless the priestly ceremonial service, the school learning, the authority of the Veda and the separating differences of the castes, by establishing as fundamental, moral purity and goodness. This building up of something new, whereby that which is old falls of itself, is the method of all successful prophets.

Although Buddha did not wish to be a social reformer, as has often been thought, yet indirectly he did become one by making caste religiously unimportant. He said: "My law is a law of grace for all, my law makes no difference between the high and the low, the rich and the poor; as water purifies all and fire consumes all and the heavens have space for all." Naturally, Buddha had to experience that among his disciples the rich were but few while the poor flocked to him in hosts. Hence, his saying: "It is hard to be rich and learn the way (to salvation)." "The poor man fills the beggar-cup of Buddha with a handful of flowers while ten thousand bushels full from the rich man cannot fill it; through the whole night the lamp of the poor woman burns, while the lamps which the rich man gives go out." On one occasion Ananda, his disciple,

## Brahmanism and Gautama Buddha

met a girl of the most despised class of the Tschandalas, at a well and asked her for a drink of water; she is afraid to give it to him for fear a gift from her hand will make him unclean, but he says: "My sister, I ask not after thy caste or thy family; I beg water of thee if thou canst give it to me." She gives him the water and Ananda takes her as the first woman in the new congregation. With this ethical and universal side to the salvation-way, the form of Buddha's preaching corresponds. In public places, he makes addresses and holds converse with the mob, not concerning theological problems or questions of priestly ritual, but concerning the one question which was near to all their hearts: How can I become blest? concerning which he spoke in simple proverbs and in pictures and parables easily understood by all. For instance, he spoke of the healer who, in order to heal a poisonous wound must give man pain when he draws out the arrow, but then heals the wounds by curative herbs; or, again, of the congregation which he likens to the sea wherein costly pearls and gruesome monsters are close together, and in which all streams disappear without distinction. Again: "As the farmer must wait for the sprouting of his seed and can do no more than lead the water, so must the disciple wait in patience for the time of pure salvation; meanwhile keeping his life disciplined and pure. As the lotus flower rises immaculate from the waters of a marsh, so can the saint



## Religion and Historic Faiths

from the impurity of the surrounding world. As the deep sea is quiet and clear, so is the peace of the wise man hearkening to truth."

In conclusion, a few beautiful sayings from the Dhammapada, a collection of sayings comparable to our Sermon on the Mount:

"Man gathers flowers and inclines toward pleasure: as the floods of water pour over a village in the night, so death comes on him and hurries him away, the destroyer in his power forces him of insatiable desire. Out of joy, sorrow and fear are born; out of love, sorrow and fear are born: he who is saved from rejoicing and from loving [the attachment to perishable possessions], for him there is no pain, whence could fear come? The treasure that is buried in a deep cavern may be lost, but the treasure that no thief can steal is gathered through love and piety, temperance and self-restraint. The fool chases after vanity, he is deceived, while the wise man holds seriousness to be his richest treasure. Hate is never overcome by hate, that is an eternal rule. Whatever an enemy does to an enemy, a spirit turned toward doing evil makes the evil only worse. Though the victor in battle may conquer a thousand times thousands, yet is he the greatest victor who conquers himself. Anger should be overcome by goodness, lying by truth; and to him who begs something should be given of the little which one has: thus does one enter into communion with the gods. We live happily, freed from hate in the midst of haters, free from attack in the midst of the heart-sick, free from care among the anxious, happy though we cannot call anything our own. Thus do we become like the blessed gods."

Finally, a few polemical sayings against the externality of the Brahman service of works:

"Not the abstinence from fish and meat, not going naked and cutting the hair, not wearing rough garments, and not bringing sacrifices for Agni, can make him pure who is not

## Brahmanism and Gautama Buddha

free from self-deception. Thou fool, what help is the cutting of hair, or the garment of skins? Your low desires are in you and you make your outside clean. He who suffers reproaches without guilt bears chains and molestation, he who prepares a strong army for himself by patience of the many, he it is whom I call a Brahman. He who has overcome the wicked path of error, he who has forced his way through the waves and reached the shore, rich in contemplation, freed from desire and hesitation, he who is liberated from existence and has found Nirvana, him do I call a true Brahman."

These sayings are all quoted after the translation of Rhys Davids's *Buddhism* and Oldenberg's *Buddha*.

## X

### BUDDHISM

IN my last lecture, I followed the legendary tradition in telling of the life of Gautama Buddha, and by a number of examples, I tried to show you the popular manner of his preaching. Now we must enter a little more in detail into the important fundamental thoughts of his doctrine, then into the organization of his congregation, and finally into the ecclesiastical development of the Buddha religion in India and in other lands.

The four underlying truths on which Buddha's teaching rests have been mentioned. They are: (1) That all life is suffering; (2) Concerning the cause of suffering; (3) Concerning the dissipation of suffering, and (4) Concerning the way to the end of suffering. The first, that all life is suffering, was practically conceded from the beginning by the world-weary Indian, and it serves as the varied theme of countless sayings and pictures. But wherein does the cause of the suffering lie? Primarily in the "thirst" for pleasure, power, life and happiness. But upon what does this insatiable desire depend? That is explained by the teaching.

## Buddhism

of "the causal connection of events." The last link in this chain is "not-knowing," namely, the worthlessness of all life and the non-reality of the I; out of this not-knowing originate the desires ("tendencies of mind," Rhys Davids), out of them consciousness, out of that corporeity, then senses and objects, contact and feelings, thirst and clinging (to the objects), then (new) birth, age and death in one endless return by way of this cycle. This psychological deduction is not quite clear (it might be compared to Schopenhauer's teaching that individuation originates in unconscious will and therewith the objectivation of the will in consciousness). In any event, this much can be recognized as the essential sense, that the desire which is rooted in the not-knowing is the cause of the embodiment of the consciousness in ever-new forms of existence, wherewith the "how" of this future becoming is always conditioned by the nature of the preceding desire. And therein consists the law of causality governing the world-process, the one unconditioned thing in this world of all-conditioned eventuation.

As the Brahman saw but the persistent Being in all Becoming, so the Buddhist saw in all seeming being only the constant becoming; it is the same opposition which we find in Greek philosophy of the Elätics (Parmenides) to Heraclitus: in the former the being without becoming, in the latter becoming without being. This all-governing law

## Religion and Historic Faiths

of causality, however, is not a personal providence; there is no such thing here, for Buddha will have none of the world-spirit of the Brahmans and the popular gods; though he does not deny them, they have no more religious importance for him than the gods of Epicurus. But we must not think here of a blind power of fate, a Moira, for it is not an external law, not a strange power which rules over men, but it is only the continuous power of man's own action, his "karma." This necessity, according to which each one reaps what he has sown, perhaps, may be best compared with the law of "moral order" in the sense of Fichte's philosophy. Naturally one presupposition seems inevitable, that he who in a future existence receives the reward for his deeds, either in the present or in previous existences, must be the same one who was the doer of those former deeds; in other words, that there must be accepted a continued existence of the soul as the persistent subject of the doing and the suffering in the various lives. But the existence of a persistent, substantial soul, in the change of its conditions, is the very thing most emphatically denied; what we call soul does not exist in reality, according to Buddhist teaching which seems to go back as far as Gautama himself. But it is merely a semblance, a name for the temporary grouping of five elements (Skandhas) namely, corporeity, feelings, ideas, desires, and consciousness. Behind this group of phenomena or conditions, there is no

## Buddhism

substance, no perpetual I. Various pictures are used in order to visualize this thought: as wagon is only the name for the combination of the various parts which, grouped together, form a wagon, so Soul is only the name for the grouping together of the five elements just named; again, the soul resembles a flame which seems to be an existing thing, but which, in reality, is only the continuous process of ever-new combustibles being consumed; again, the soul is like a stream whose semblance of being consists in a perpetual coming and going of ever-new waves. These two pictures last mentioned are like those used by Heraclitus (*Panta rei*).

This, then, is the Buddhistic doctrine of the soul which is expressly put forward as one of the cardinal truths, the not-knowing of which belongs to the supreme illusions, to be given up upon entering into the path of salvation. Evidently this question comes up: If there be no real soul, how can there be a transmigration of souls? How can the next life-course be a retribution for the actions in the present life-course if it is no longer the same subject who acted before and then receives the reward? The Buddhists themselves declare that to be an inconceivable mystery, and, in fact, there is no solution, not even by the analogy to two generations, of which the second, although it consists of entirely different subjects, still enters into the heritage of the rewards and punishments of the first. As a psychological explanation, one could only say

## Religion and Historic Faiths

that the difficulty originates in a collision of two different kinds of motives. The one is the thought of retribution, not in the external setting of a judicial distribution of reward and punishments, but in the deeper form of the inner connection of seed and harvest. This deep true thought clothed itself for Buddha in the traditional notion of the transmigration of souls. On the other hand, the ax was to be put to the root of man's egotistic desire for happiness by the knowledge of the illusion of an independent I; the practical demand for selflessness clothed itself in the theoretical form of the denial of any real self. These two motives enter into an opposition logically difficult to harmonize, but they do combine in the common aim at ethical self-control.

With that we come to the further question of the "way of salvation." Here we must differentiate between the general way, the elementary or lay morals, and the particular way of him who is progressing to perfection, the morals of the monks. The former contains beautiful features, universally valuable, particularly its heartiness and purity, its unselfishness and humane spirit. Not external castigation or ritual works, but purity of mind from delusion and passion have the emphasis. "Each one is the cause of his own suffering and becomes free from it through himself; purity and impurity are matters for each individual himself; no one can make another pure"—a principle which recalls

## Buddhism

Kant's autonomy. In the previous pages I have mentioned other beautiful sayings, such as that of self-conquest being the greatest courage and of the conquest of hate through love, of lying by truth. The duties are summed up in ten commandments, of which the first five hold unconditionally and the other five are recommended merely as means of assistance to virtue. They are: (1), Destroy no life; (2), Take no strange property; (3), Do not lie; (4), Drink no intoxicating drinks; (5), Abstain from all illegal sexual intercourse; (6), Do not eat at the wrong time; (7), Use no wreaths or salves; (8), Sleep on a hard couch; (9), Avoid dances, music, and plays; (10), Own no gold or silver. Besides these, the layman should celebrate the three monthly holy days by fasting and by benevolence to the people of the order; also hold father and mother in honor and engage in an honest business.

This ethics for the laity is only a preliminary to the "noble path of salvation" which leads to sanctity and to Nirvana. In order to enter upon this path, one must become a monk. For such a one, the commandments of the lay ethics become more strict. The counsels given in the last five commandments become obligatory; the commandment against illegal sexual intercourse becomes a command to abstain from all sexual intercourse; private ownership altogether is not permitted, but the monk must beg all of his nourishment; these are the well-



## Religion and Historic Faiths

known monastic oaths of celibacy and voluntary poverty. The life of a monk, however, is not in itself perfection, but merely the way thereto, like a protecting wall behind which he who is striving for perfection is protected against the assaults and dissipations of the world. The final and really decisive point does not lie in any external conduct, but in the inner work of "right thinking and right self-contemplation."

Such pious meditation is accurately described and four grades of the same are differentiated, but the boundary lines between them are not fixed. The first of these is the piercing of the naïve illusions of the natural man; then comes the suppression of all sensual and selfish affects; then complete apathy, and finally a kind of ecstatic consciousness or disappearance of all definite ideas in a dreaming consciousness (which is the summit of the contemplation in neo-Platonism). This abnormal condition, in some degree an auto-hypnotism, does not hold as the rule, but is rather the passing exception. The rule, however, for the highest grade of meditation is absolute peace which is no longer moved by external stimuli or inner struggle, in which a full peace and therewith the desired bliss, the Nirvana, is attained. The wise man who has reached this stage is the saint; for him all desire is dead and therewith the root of all new births is killed. Nirvana is not the extermination of life but rather of the desire or will to live; but where this is

## Buddhism

killed down to the root, there the cause of new incarnation is removed, hence the certainty of the complete cessation of individual existence after death—at least this must be considered the logical consequence of the above-described doctrine of the soul and of Karma; how far that conclusion was drawn is questionable. That Nirvana in any event is a soul condition of peace, of bliss, attainable here below, is apparent from many passages; for instance, “the disciple who has laid aside all pleasure and desire, he who is rich in wisdom, he has attained here below salvation from death, rest, Nirvana, the eternal place.” Into the mouth of one of the disciples of Buddha this saying is put: “I do not ask for death nor do I ask for life; I wait until the hour comes as a servant who expects his reward with conscious and with wakeful spirit.”

The question whether all is over after death, for that saint who has already attained Nirvana, is said to have been asked of one of the first pupils of the master, but the report says that he refused to answer it because a knowledge thereof is of no service for salvation. The positive spirits of the congregation knew that the consequence of the teaching of the unreality of the soul would lead to a denial of the further existence of the saint, but it never became the official doctrine. The stage at which they rested was this: that nothing concerning the matter had been revealed; the direct statement that after death the saint is no more was censured as

## Religion and Historic Faiths

unchurchly thinking. This reticence of decision may be construed in favor of those for or against it, but this much is clear, that the religious desire was merely for salvation from the suffering of transitoriness; whether beyond this there was any such thing as positive being or whether it was simply a not-being remained undecided, a matter of religious indifference. If we add to this that the logical consequence doubtless leads to a non-existence after death, the judgment is justified that this salvation is only negative, a liberation from the evil of the world without substituting any positive good. This is explainable by the life-weariness of the Indian for whom existence itself is only a source of torture, for whom the positive purposes of life—acting, striving and hoping,—are wanting; with such pure purposelessness of life, the balance of his weal and woe must naturally yield a negative result. Hence the negative quality of this doctrine of salvation which corresponds to the more negative and passive character of the ethics. Its motive is not so much the recognition of the right and value of human personality as the indifference to all values, the condemnation of individual existence itself as the source of all evil; hence there is sympathy with suffering beings, but there is no energetic activity; there is the killing off of selfish instincts, but not the building up of a higher self.

There is a negative but not a positive content in this ideal of life. Buddhistic ethics may be

## Buddhism

summed up in the biblical words "love not the world, for the world with its joys perisheth." In Buddhism, this remains the final position, while the Bible passes on from negation: "But he who does the will of God, he remains for all eternity," that is, whoever has made the positive purpose of the whole, the general highest good, content and purpose of his life, for him life possesses a super-temporal value and, therewith, the guarantee of an imperishable permanence, even though that is beyond our conception.

Another question arises in connection with this negative quality of the Buddhistic object of salvation. The Buddhist worships his master as the bearer of salvation and its exemplar, the omniscient, the holy and the perfect; but as such, he has really entered into Nirvana, actually exists no longer, or if he does, it is only in that mysterious resting being which has no longer any connection with the world of time. So the Buddhistic congregation has a historical founder who, although he is the object of their grateful worship and edificatory contemplation, is not really a substitute for the belief in God which is lacking. He has not the lasting power of salvation, to which the pious spirit might lift itself in confidence and hope.

The religious need of the Buddhistic church was met, in this case, in remarkable fashion. The doctrine soon appeared by which the coming of Gautama Buddha was only one of countless Buddha

## Religion and Historic Faiths

appearances which are repeated in every age of the world when human suffering has need of him. Before Gautama, the founder of the congregation, there are supposed to have been twenty-four Buddhas, and concerning some of them both names and legends are reported. After Gautama, other Buddhas will follow, and concerning these future Buddhas, it is believed that they do now exist in heaven as chosen candidates for the Buddha dignity. The next of these, Maitreya, so runs the tradition in the Lalitavistara, was chosen by Gautama before he became a man, and was designated as his successor in the mission of salvation (as "Bodhisattva"). His picture was early placed in the Buddhist church at Ceylon alongside that of Gautama, as an object of worship. Later, other pre-existing Bodhisattvas in heaven were added to Maitreya, spirit of the good. Such were particularly Mantusri, the spirit of wisdom, and Avalokitesvara, the spirit of power and providence. The spirits of good, wisdom and power are evidently nothing more than the attributes of the one highest spirit whom we call God, made independent (just as the Persian archangels, or Amschaspan, stand for the representatives of the qualities of Ahura Mazda). It cannot be wondered at then, that in a later development of the north Buddhistic church, all of these Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are interpreted to be the forms of appearance of one original Buddha who is considered "the self-existing, eter-

## Buddhism

nal being, infinite light and life," that is to say, God in the full sense. It cannot really be said, then, that Gautama Buddha, the historical founder of the congregation, became a god in the belief of his congregation; but he is held to be the latest and most important appearance of the eternal spirit of salvation which had revealed itself before him and will reveal itself after him repeatedly in new forms. Involuntarily, we recall the Johannine teaching of the divine Logos which, even before its appearance in Jesus, had revealed itself as the light to men, and after Jesus continued to reveal itself in the spirit of the congregation, the Paraclete, which finds in the apostles and the prophets instruments of its continued revelation. Such a similarity in the formation of two doctrines, built up independently of one another, might well serve as testimony for the thinking student of history that we are here dealing not with an arbitrary play of fantasy, but with a deep development of religious series of thoughts, rooted in the nature of the religious consciousness and of natural needs.

These, then, are the main teachings of Buddhism. I can only indicate, in brief, its further formation and development as a church. From what has already been said, it is clear that the monks constitute the kernel of the Buddhistic church, but Buddhism is not exclusively a religion for monks, for the Buddha belief, from the beginning, offered consolatory and educative motives to that congregation

## Religion and Historic Faiths

of laymen which attached itself to the members of the order and formed the wider circle. Gautama Buddha himself broke the first ground not only for the spread of his teaching, but also for the organization of the monk class. He prescribed certain rules of discipline, but later there was many a dispute as to how far these strict regulations had to be obeyed and which of them could be traced back by tradition to Buddha himself and which to his first pupils. With the growing wealth of the monasteries, there came lively debates and controversies as to whether the commandment which forbade all possession of money had to be taken seriously, a controversy similar to that known to us in the history of Christian monastic orders, especially the Franciscans. Concerning acceptance into the orders, this much may be said, that children were admitted into the novitiate where the parents had given permission; actual acceptance and consecration could only take place after the twentieth year, and was dependent upon the consent of the congregation. Among the monastic oaths, besides those of chastity and poverty, was one forbidding the proclamation of false miraculous powers. This was done because the power of performing miracles was thought to be connected with full saintliness and so some one might perhaps pretend to miraculous power in order to obtain that dignity during life. In the good weather periods of the year, the monks wandered about with their beggar's pots which they

## Buddhism

were permitted to show only without making any request. In the rainy season, they gathered together in enclosed spaces; later, in great monasteries founded by rich patrons and surrounded by beautiful parks. In them they remained together for three months of each year, and during this time, there were regular gatherings—they can scarcely be called services of God—for pious discussions and for confession. On such occasions all the rules for moral duties and monastic discipline were read, and at each point, he who was conscious of any guilt was obliged to confess the same openly; in case of heavy guilt, expulsion from the order was the penalty, and in cases of unimportant infractions a lighter sentence of repentance was imposed. Anyone was free to resign voluntarily and therewith, he became a simple lay-brother without becoming an enemy of the order. The acceptance of nuns into the narrower circle of the order was reluctantly agreed to by Buddha himself. Ananda, the favorite disciple, had championed them and, despite the master's grave doubts, made the beginning. The needs of the layman were cared for by the sermons of wandering monks and the house to house care for souls which they connected with their begging expeditions. As for the rest, the worship of the Buddhist people consisted mainly in an adoration of relics of Buddha, in pilgrimages to the sacred cities of his earthly life, in sacrificial offerings to the images of saints (flowers and incense



## Religion and Historic Faiths

especially being used) and in donations to the monasteries.

In the history of the Buddhist church, the reign of the powerful King Asoka (270-233 B.C.) plays the same rôle as that of Constantine in the Christian Church. After a tempestuous youth, in the third year of his reign, Asoka is said to have been converted to faith in Buddha by a monk to whom he remained attached throughout all his life as a lay-brother, and whom he adored greatly. He gave proof of this not only by rich endowments and buildings for church purposes, but also by making the beautiful side of Buddhistic ethics, the humane mildness and benevolence and patience, the leading principle of his rulership. In one of his edicts he declares "All men are as my children; as to them, so do I wish to all men that they may participate in all of the happiness here and beyond. There is no greater deed than the work for the general good." In another edict he expresses himself concerning the principle of tolerance thus: "The King honors all sects with small gifts and proofs of his respect, but of most importance to him is that they grow in inner value. The main thing connected therewith is carefulness of words, so that one does not laud one's own sect to heaven and make another low. Whoever does that, even though his purpose be praiseworthy, only harms his own sect. Therefore, harmony is good, so that mutually all can learn the teaching and hearken to it gladly. This

## Buddhism

is the King's wish, that all sects be well instructed and pious." In this spirit he appoints officers for the regular instruction of all classes of people, not only for men but also, and this is a novelty in India, for women. Among the moral duties thus taught, respect toward parents and teachers, goodness and mildness toward children, servants and poor, righteousness, patience with and benevolence toward all, as well as care for animals, were the most important for him. He himself set the good example in his care for the welfare of his people. He founded hospitals for the sick, he had wells and trees and shelters provided for the wanderers along the roads, and he made it a duty of his officials to treat all citizens humanely, particularly those of the lowest classes and prisoners. Besides this care for the popular application of the lay-ethics of Buddhism, he devoted himself to the ordering of church matters. For this purpose he called the great council of Patna, 252 B.C., the third, according to Buddhistic tradition. There the disputes concerning monastic regulations were settled and the oldest canon of the sacred writings was fixed. Whether this latter was the same as that which had acquired authority in the South-Buddhistic church under the name Tripitaka ("three baskets") seems questionable.

Finally, Asoka was the first to begin the spread of Buddhism in lands outside of India by the sending of missionaries. The mission to Ceylon, headed by Asoka's son and daughters, was particularly suc-

## Religion and Historic Faiths

cessful. They were welcomed there in friendly fashion and laid the foundation for the most flourishing and, to this day, the most purely preserved Buddhistic church. Asoka also sent missionaries to Kashmir, Bactria, and lower India, and sought to establish connections with Syria, Macedonia and Egypt, but with what success is not known to us. Several centuries later, Buddhism found its way into Eastern Asia where it gained ground more and more as the centuries rolled on, until to-day that is its main seat. But it was a somewhat different kind of Buddhism from that of the South in Ceylon and lower India. At the beginning of the second century of the Christian era occurred that important schism in the Buddhist church which divided the adherents of the Mahayana from the Hinayana (the great and little vessel). The former did not deviate much from the older form of the Buddha teaching. Over the single Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, they set an original Buddha as the highest principle, an eternal self-existing being whose particular forms of appearance are the single Buddhas of the past and the Bodhisattvas now existing in heaven. These beings, which here and there may have merged with the popular gods and the local heroes, became the objects of religious prayer, to whom appeals for help were made in every time of distress. No more was the practical ideal so much the demand for salvation from sorrow-laden existence through a passive Nirvana but rather the dignity of a Bodhisattva

## Buddhism

who had the power to act for others as a savior and redeemer. The ethical-social motive of the Buddhist doctrine of salvation here outweighed the purely personal and at bottom somewhat egoistical interest in passive salvation and bliss. In this form of the doctrine, Nirvana finally became a positive blissful existence in the world beyond, a heaven or "pure land." With all of this a tendency had been entered upon which came in close contact with popular Brahmanism in India and Taoism in China, a tendency which held various possibilities of development in itself—on the one hand to theistic belief in one God and on the other to naturalistic polytheism with its accompanying magic and exorcisms. This last tendency became the stronger in India from the fifth century on. The report of the journey of the Chinese pilgrim Juen-Tschunang, dated seventh century, shows that Indian Buddhism had completely degenerated and fallen into a mass of crude superstitions and magic notions. In such condition it could not offer any powerful opposition to the mighty reaction of Brahmanism. In the eleventh century it succumbed entirely to Islam which made its victorious entry into India. In Ceylon alone, Buddhism retained its original character and maintained itself through all the changes of political circumstances without a break to this day.

Buddhism had a peculiar development in Thibet. There it took on the nature of a hierarchical system whose head was the high priest Dalai-Lama, a pope-

## Religion and Historic Faiths

king. The possessor of this dignity was considered the incarnation of the Bodhisattva, Avalokitesvara, merged with the ancient protecting spirit of the country.

“With its shaved priests, bells, rosaries, images, holy water and imposing robes, with its processions, formulæ of confession, mystic rites, and incense for the service of God, which the layman only witnesses as a spectator, with its abbots, monks and nuns of various grades, with its worship of the twofold virgin and of the saints and angels, its fasts, confessions and purgatorial fires, its powerful monasteries and magnificent cathedrals, its powerful hierarchy, cardinals and pope—Lamaism has externally, at least, a strong resemblance to Romanism, despite their essential difference of teaching and manner of thought.” (Rhys Davids.)

The contrast to this quasi-Roman Catholic form of Buddhism is the Protestant form which it took in the Schinschu sect of the Japanese Buddhists after the thirteenth century. This sect teaches that neither one's own works nor theological knowledge, but belief in Amida Suddha alone, makes blessed. (Amida is the Japanese name for the Buddha of faith, the celestial spirit of salvation which bears about the same relation to the historical Gautama, the founder of the congregation, that the Christ of faith bears to the historical Jesus.) To him alone is prayer to be made, not for earthly gifts, but merely as an expression of gratitude for his saving grace. The faithful will not have to wait until after death to be led by Amida into his paradise, but experience his blessing presence even now, directly in

## Buddhism

the heart. The priest is no more holy than the layman, but he is only the teacher of the truth which makes blessed; the priest may marry, for the family is the best place in which to practice pious living.

In conclusion I will quote two confessions of earnest Buddhistic piety; the first is that of an Indian Buddhist of the eleventh century who was forced to fly from his home because of his faith; and the second is that of an adherent of the above-mentioned Japanese sect:

"Whether I dwell in heaven or in hell, in the city of spirits or of men, may my thoughts be firmly set upon thee, for there is no other happiness for me. To me thou art father, mother, brother, sister; thou art my true friend in dangers, O my beloved; thou art my master, my teacher who doth impart unto me wisdom sweet as nectar. Thou art my wealth, my joy, my pleasure, my greatness, my fame, my wisdom and my life, thou art my all, O, omniscient Buddha."

On the shoreless sea of a world of pain  
Where follow birth and death without an end,  
There drove we on, the sport of the wave,  
Until Amida, full of mercy once again,  
Did in his grace the boat of rescue send,  
Which to the blessed port now bears us safe.

## XI

### THE GREEK RELIGION

WE will pass from the Indians to the Greeks. In the religious history of these two peoples, there exists a closer resemblance than commonly is believed. In everyday thinking, the opinion has taken firm root that two things could not possibly be in greater opposition: on the one hand, the gay Greek full of power for life, and on the other, the world-weary Indian, ascetic and contemplative. But we have seen that originally, in the period of which the songs of the Rig Veda give us knowledge, the Indians, too, were a nation rejoicing in deed and joyous in living, as well as the Greeks of the time of Homer; besides, we will discover that the world-view and mood of the Greek people ended in a deep world-woe, an elegiac resignation, a flight from the world of the senses to the world of ideas. This is what makes the parallel between these two peoples of such interest: their common revulsion from the joy of life to resignation and life-denial.

Yet there is one thing which differentiates the religious history of the Greeks from that of the Indians; one thing which the Indians lacked utterly,

## The Greek Religion

the Greeks possessed, namely, a sense of order and proportion, of clearness and beauty. This artistic tendency was the *charisma* of the Greeks, ever present in their religion as in their philosophy, preserving them from the excesses of Indian fantasticism and dreaming. It is this which made it possible for them to exercise a deep influence upon Oriental belief and thought such as had never been possible to Indian wisdom.

Hegel aptly characterized the Greek religion as the "religion of beauty." The gods of Homer,—Zeus, Apollo, Athene, Aphrodite and the rest,—are essentially the æsthetic ideals of beautiful mankind. Therein lies their advantage and questionable weakness. The advantage is this: they are humanized to a far greater extent than the gods of the Indians, the Germans, or the gods of any other Indo-Germanic people had been. To the credit of the Homeric poetry (which naturally was not the work of any single poet, but of generations of singers, living from the eighth to the tenth century, B.C.) be it said that through it, the various local and tribal gods and the spirits of ancestors and of nature, which were at hand, were uprooted from their nature-soil and humanized to a greater extent than anywhere else. Greek mythology itself preserves the record of this change in the legend of the struggle between the Olympians and the Titans, which ended in the complete victory of the Olympians. The Titans were conquered once for all and



## Religion and Historic Faiths

hurled into the Orcus below; in other words, the Homeric gods no longer must struggle with the powers of nature, they are no longer enmeshed in the processes of nature but they have become independent persons, entirely human in their emotions, thoughts and actions, so much so, that we are at a loss to recognize their former nature-meaning, and at best, make suppositions concerning them. They have become human beings, beautiful human beings; ideals of human beauty, grace and dignity, in the sense of that harmonious balance of sensuality and reason, which was ever present to the Greek in his ideal of the beautiful-good (*kalokagathon*). But nowhere is it the purely moral ideal of the good as the thing of absolute value, for which under some circumstances, even that which is pleasant to the senses must be sacrificed. These humanized gods rise far above mortals in power, knowledge and happiness, but they are in no way unlimited and, least of all, morally perfect. Though it is often said of them, that they can do all things and know all things, many different instances show that that is not so: their power is limited by fate, that *moira*, whose decree even Zeus must ask, and—even though it be contrary to his will, as in the case of the death of his son Sarpedon—must obey absolutely. More imperfect than their power is the moral goodness of these gods; you know what the morals of these Olympians was, their constant quarrels, their intriguing, their unclean love-affairs,

## The Greek Religion

beings not even horrified by adultery. Their attitude toward men is not praiseworthy; they ask not after merit or worth, but rest their decisions on personal moods and selfish motives—sympathies and antipathies, jealousy, revenge and the like. Hence it must be said: these gods are esthetically refined beings (compare for example an Aphrodite with its Asiatic prototype, Astarte or Cybele, what a difference between the rude nature-power here and the human ideal of grace and charm there); nevertheless, the truth remains that even this charming Aphrodite is not a moral ideal. The gods of Homer are ideals of humanity, beautiful but not good; they are elevated above the crude elemental nature, but they feel and act after the manner of primitive peoples and of children, who know no higher controlling law of goodness than their own arbitrary wishes and their moods.

It is a strange contrast to find that a Zeus, in his official activities, so to speak, is the representative of right and righteousness, the guardian of the order of the universe, the protector of the helpless (particularly in a political sense), the stranger and the weak; as "King of Gods and Men," he is the representative and stronghold of justice in the world. So far then, the god-idea, especially in the forms of Zeus, Apollo and Athene, had been made moral. But this moralization evidently stopped half way, since, according to the legends of mythology, these gods were in their private lives any-

## Religion and Historic Faiths

thing but moral examples for men. Therein lies the reason for Plato's well-known exclusion of Homer as literature for the schools; and if we refuse to allow ourselves to be blinded by æsthêtic charm and put ourselves without prejudice in the place of a Greek teacher of young and old, we will find Plato's judgment easy to understand, however crass a contradiction to the usual Greek reverence of Homer it may be.

Without doubt, the reason why the Greek conception of God never rose above this dual nature lay in the fact that those who handled it and handed it down were not the moral teachers of people, not the prophets and the priests, but poets and artists for whom the æsthêtic charm was of such moment that they questioned no farther as to what was morally salutary. The poets of the Homeric epics were wandering singers who entertained the masters of the houses by performing their songs at the courts of princes and the knightly castles; we may think readily that they narrated their stories of the gods and heroes in the fashion which would be most acceptable in those circles where a gay life that oscillated between feasting, adventure and feuds was led, but which knew nothing of serious moral purposes and ideals. Because Greece never achieved a national monarchy, which could care for the permanent welfare of the people, nor a priesthood, which undertook the education of the people, therefore, neither the moralization nor the unification of

## The Greek Religion

the god-world could be carried out completely, as was the case in the religion of Zarathustra or even of Israel; the gods remained the ideals of the frivolous nobles, and Zeus remained the first among his peers, the presiding officer of the Olympian aristocracy.

In the forms of Athene and Apollo whom Homer ranks nearest to Zeus, the ideal side of the Greek conception of the gods, finds comparatively its purest expression. The nature-background is almost entirely gone in the case of Athene, the motherless daughter of Zeus; she is the goddess of wisdom, prudence, diplomacy, industry, technical and artistic skill, and the patroness of an industrious citizenship as well as of arts and sciences. And Apollo, the son of Zeus, is the revealer of his will; in the worship of Apollo at Delphi, Greek religion attained its highest, and from Delphi there emanated an influence which acted beneficially upon the culture of the whole people. From of old, there had been an oracle of the earth-spirit Python at Delphi; of him it was believed that he dwelt as a snake in the depths of a fissure of the earth. The Doric priests of Apollo took possession of this site of the oracle, and legend represents this as a victory of Apollo over Python. Thereby a higher, more moralized train entered into the use of this oracle. The enthusiastic form still remained: the virgin priestess Pythia sat upon a tripod, placed over the fissure in the earth, from which sense-destroying

## Religion and Historic Faiths

vapors rose and hypnotized her. In this condition, whatever she uttered, "with raging mouth," was held to be the word of the god, of whom she seemed to be possessed. While the enthusiasm of the priestess was the basis of the oracle, it was not all, for behind Pythia stood the intelligent priesthood of Delphi, who, in the course of time, had become rich in experiences, in knowledge of the world and of men, and had established many and intricate relations. They understood how to edit sensibly and to retouch the oracles spoken by the priestess in her ecstasy, so that her words became of use. This is a noteworthy example of an experience, often found active in the history of religion, where the combination of an enthusiastic prophecy and priestly wisdom resulted in the most effective religious influence upon the people.

It has been maintained that the Delphic oracle governed and directed the life of the entire Greek people from the ninth to the sixth century. Despite the authority of a Curtius, the statement may not be entirely correct; nevertheless, this much is certain, that nothing great transpired in Greece in those centuries, without the sanction of the Delphic oracle: this was true of the framing of laws, the perfection of political alliances, the sending of colonies as well as of the founding of states. Certainly, this sanction must have been held in high regard or it would not have been sought constantly. Most important was the influence which the Delphic worship of Apollo

## The Greek Religion

exercised upon the national religion and morals. A higher conception of religious atonement and purity emanated from this pure god, and that became of greatest cultural importance. The blood-atonement, which had previously been practiced as blood-revenge, was now subject to state-regulation. It was a remarkable step forward that the blood which had been spilled did not cry out for revenge, but that the purpose and attitude of the doer was asked—whether he had shed the blood intentionally or by chance, whether he was right or wrong in so doing. It was of utmost importance to the whole administration of justice in Greece that not merely the deed as such, but the intention of the doer, was the standard of measure. From that stage, it was but a short step to the idea that the thing of importance in the judgment of the value of men, was not the external action, but the purity of the attitude; that this thought, in principle at least, had been grasped by the better ones among the representatives of the religion of Apollo, can scarcely be doubted. The warning which greeted the pilgrims to the temple at Delphi read: "For the good, one drop suffices, but for the bad, all the waves of the sea cannot wash their sins away." The other two inscriptions there are characteristic of Greek piety and morality: "Know thyself," and "Nothing beyond measure." Thoughtful knowledge of self and quiet temperance, self-control, that is the ideal; the suppression of the senses was not demanded, but a

## Religion and Historic Faiths

training of self by the control of all unbounded passions; that is the fundamental of Greek ethics, which Aristotle formulated in his well-known definition of virtue as the mean between two extremes. It must be conceded, that even if the highest plane had not been reached therein, at least it marked a stage in the moral culture of mankind, worthy of great respect.

From the sixth century on, the priests of Apollo at Delphi steadily lost in influence; partly, it was their own fault, but mainly, it was because of their anti-national attitude in the Persian wars, which the Greek people could never forget. The new conditions generally had been at work; the sixth century in Greece was a period of deep-seated changes and innovations. The upheaval in state affairs occasioned by the rise of the democracy in the separate city-states was partly the consequence and partly the cause of a widespread striving for the emancipation of individual thought and action from traditional faith and paternal custom; it was the powerful movement of the Greek spirit growing more and more conscious of his characteristic nature, his impulse for freedom, clarity, reasonableness, without which there never had been a Periclean age—even though the shadows inevitably accompanied the light.

The way in which this new time-spirit expressed itself in the religion of the Greeks is remarkable. Almost contemporaneously we see two new ten-

## The Greek Religion

dencies emerge; the opposition to the Homeric religion was their one common ground, in everything else they were impelled by motives that differed and satisfied the needs of different classes of the people. On the one hand, a renaissance of the old, popular peasant-worship, which might be regarded as the democratic reaction against the aristocratic state-worship, except,—one point that must not be forgotten,—that this reaction bore within it the most fruitful seed of religious progress in the sense of individual deepening and mystical contemplation. On the other hand, the beginning of philosophical criticism of the mythical religion, a rationalism which originated with the Ionian nature-philosophers, lived on in the work of the elegiac and tragic poets and reached its climax in the skepticism of the Sophists. Therewith came the turn into the new movement in the philosophy of religion under Socrates and Plato which might be designated as the common product and higher union of the religion of the mysteries and the thinking of the philosophers. In brief outlines, I will attempt to describe these three movements.

First, then, the renaissance of the old peasant-religion of agriculture and wine-growing, of Demeter and Dionysius. Though the Olympian world of the gods of Homer had crowded them into the background so far as official worship was concerned, yet the nature-gods had never been suppressed entirely. The aristocratic gods of Olympus,



## Religion and Historic Faiths

who cared only for the larger affairs of all, never had satisfied the needs of the people and not even the Homeric shutting-off of souls in Hades had been strong enough to break the allegiance of the families to the combination of soul-worship with the realms beyond. But now, in the age when democracy was growing more powerful, the people turned again with renewed zeal to those old but forgotten legends and customs which revolved about the worship of the gods of the fruitful earth and the mysterious nether world.

From ancient times there had been a worship of Demeter and her daughter Kore (Persephone) at Eleusis. Legend said that the goddess herself, while seeking her daughter, whom Pluto, the god of death, had abducted, met with friendly hospitality there and established the services; their original content was nothing more than the annual experience of the death of vegetation (the abduction of Kore) and her resurrection in the Spring (the return of Kore to her mother). This simple nature-notion, which we met in the Isis-Osiris myths, was at the root of the Eleusinian worship of Demeter, but with it there was united a higher religious idea, a hope of a happy beyond for the souls of the pious. It may be that the worship of Dionysius was at work here also; from the time of the incorporation of Eleusis into the Athenian state and the conversion of the Demeter cult into a state affair, the cult of Dionysius, native to Athens, was combined with it;

## The Greek Religion

besides, they were both closely related through their passionate motives and dramatic effects, so that it is easily conceivable that the enthusiastic-mystical feature of the Demeter cult, upon which the great attractive power of the 'Eleusinian mysteries' rested, dates from that period. What was its actual magic? It has been thought that the priests imparted esoteric teachings. That was an error; altogether, here was no matter of doctrine nor articles of faith. The heart of the celebration was "the actions," dramatic rehearsals of the fate of the two goddesses, the mourning of the mother for her lost daughter, the quest, and finally the joy of the reunited. When we recall that this was a celebration of gods, who were not leading a life of bliss on Olympus, heedless of the sufferings of men, but gods who suffered the sorrows of mortals, tasted of death, and then again overcame it, then we can well understand that for the spirit in search of consolation, the hope of a life of bliss beyond could easily attach itself to this celebration. For, be it well understood, it was not a matter of the mere continuation of the soul after death; the Greeks had always believed in that, but the condition of the souls in Hades was such a miserable shadow-existence, that an Achilles prefers rather to be a day-laborer on earth than a prince in Hades; naturally, such a woeful future state could not be looked forward to with hope, but with fear. As against the ordinary lot of souls the initiated of

## Religion and Historic Faiths

Eleusis hoped for a happy life beyond, similar to that of the gods; and with what happiness this hope filled them the inspired words of their noblest men, like Pindar and Sophocles, give testimony. With certainty, no man can say upon what this hope was actually based, but we may suppose that the preparatory fasts and processions, then the growing dramatic tension, and finally, at the climax of the celebration, the seeing and the hearing of mysterious formulæ and symbols produced such an exaltation of the psychical life of the celebrants that they became one with the deity and felt themselves to be partakers of its invincible life,—hence, they would share its future fate, and might thus hope to escape the dreaded Hades.

Originally, Dionysius was a Thracian deity and was worshipped on the hills of Thrace with crude, orgiastic rites; transplanted to Athens, he became the god of the vintage, and the rural feast-days during the vintage in the autumn and the wine-testing in the spring, were spiced with many a rude joke by the peasants. Here again, Greek genius displayed its power to take over traditional, foreign raw material and ennoble, spiritualize, and transfigure it. It was the elemental liveliness of these feasts of the wine-god—the alternating songs, the dances and the pageants connected with it,—which produced the most glorious flower of Greek art, the tragic and the comic drama. That the combination of the worship of Dionysius with the worship

## The Greek Religion

of Demeter at Eleusis gave this even a higher impulse, has been mentioned. The most singular manifestation of the Dionysiac enthusiasm was that afforded by the appearance of ecstatic seers, who acted as fortune-tellers, physicians and priests of atonement to the people seeking help and advice. Around them there gathered small circles of believers, the Dionysiac *thiasoi* or conventicles, by whom ancient oracles were preserved and their number increased by new ones; among them, too, ancient traditions, such as the theogony of Hesiod, were remodeled and imitated, in short, theological doctrines thought out, and these were traced back to the revelation of some ancient seer, like Orpheus. Thus the Orphic theology and literature, which probably originated in the sixth century, came into being. Though there are but slight fragments thereof preserved, the main fundamental thoughts may still be recognized. The Dionysius-Zagreus myth of the god, killed and resurrected, which is connected with the Orphic doctrine concerning souls, forms the central point. The Orphics taught that human beings were composed of a mixture of divine (Dionysiac) and anti-divine (Titanic) elements. Man's soul is of divine origin and through his own guilt, did he sink to the life on earth; the body is its jail, its grave. Even death does not lead to its release, but to a wandering of the soul in a circle of rebirths. The one means of escape from this unfortunate circle is the employ-

## Religion and Historic Faiths

ment of the Dionysiac rites of purification, established by Orpheus. Among these were certain ascetic abstinences, particularly from the eating of meat. In the realm beyond, a blessed, god-like lot awaits those thus consecrated, while the rest will suffer castigation in the nether world or enter into new embodiments. This theme of the bliss and misery beyond was a favorite elaboration of the Orphic sacramental priests and the principal attraction of their sermons for the people; while, among the enlightened, they were regarded as swindlers and charlatans.

Almost contemporaneously with the religious movement of the sixth century just described, the enlightenment had begun. Xenophanes, who had abandoned his Ionian home after the Persian invasion and settled in Elea (Lower Italy), subjected the traditional myths to sharp criticism. Homer and Hesiod had ascribed to the gods everything which among men was held to be wicked and reprehensible: robbery, adultery and lying; equally foolish it was to conceive of the gods in human form; with equal justice, animals might represent them in animal-shapes, if they had hands. Moreover, God could only be the one spirit, with whom man might not be compared and who moved the world by his thinking. According to Parmenides, God is the all-one, unchangeable Being, while the world of the manifold and the becoming is an empty semblance, the dream of Maya as the Brahmins taught. Accord-

## The Greek Religion

ing to Heraclitus of Ephesus, there was no such thing as a permanent Being altogether but only the circle of a purposeless becoming and dissolving, in whose endless flow all the goods and values of life are submerged; the course of the world is a child's play and men are fools who hold that of importance which is liable to destruction. Among the Ionian Greeks of Asia Minor, the joy of life had given way to this pessimistic mood after their homes had fallen prey to the Persian conquerors. Even in Greece proper, where the onslaught of the Persian armies had been successfully resisted, the voices of doubt as to the value of life and of reason and righteousness in the universal order, grew louder and louder in the course of the fifth century.

In the dramas of Sophocles, we hear ever the anxious questioning of the unexplainable rulings of the gods and the complaints of the hard lot of mortals undeserved; and, even where the poet urges to pious humility, the tone of bitter pessimism betrays its presence: "Best it is never to have been born, but second best it is to return speedily thither, whence thou comest." With Euripides, this doubt of the righteousness of the divine ordering of things rises to a doubt of the existence of the gods altogether, and yet this faithlessness brings him no greater peace than did his faith; in this restless swinging to and fro, this vain seeking for positive conviction, he is the genuine son of the period of enlightenment. The main representatives of this

## Religion and Historic Faiths

period were the Sophists, the masters in oratory, among whom the practice of dialectic play with concepts soon led to that excess, which skeptically disintegrated everything traditional. Protagoras thought it could not be known whether there were gods or no; and Kritias straightway explained the belief in the gods as the invention of clever statesmen, and law as only another name for the power of the stronger.

This presumption of a superficial sham-knowledge found its master in Socrates, who held that the beginning of wisdom lies in the recognition of our lack of it. He held it to be his god-given calling to educate men to self-knowledge, to an insight into that which is salutary for morals and thus to virtue. He believed in the providence of a highest, all-decreeing reason, who employed gods of the popular faith as his instruments, and who was as much greater than our reason as the world was than our body. He believed, also, in a divine revelation within him, which he was wont to call the voice of his "Dæmonian," almost the same as what we are accustomed to call the monitory voice of conscience and the warning premonition. It is this Dæmonion which he relied upon even in opposition to the authority of the state; he says to his judges that he must obey the god, who had given him the commission to educate men to virtue, more than men. Here, for the first time, personality stands upon the good right of individual conviction as against the

## The Greek Religion

traditions of state and society. This struggle, which marks a new epoch in the history of religion, resulted in the death of Socrates. We may call him the first blood-witness of philosophy and at the same time a prophetic forerunner of Christianity.

His work, however, was active still in Plato, who broadened the self-knowledge of Socrates to a knowledge of the supersensual world of "ideas," the eternal prototypes of the true, the beautiful, and the good, which are the basis and the goal of all temporal phenomena, synthesized into a unity in the highest idea of the good, which is one with God, the creator, father and archetype of the visible world, his inborn son. In that higher world, the soul of man has its origin; the Orphic theologians had taught that the soul was divine in nature and origin, and Plato so embodied this doctrine in his philosophy that he identified the soul with the idea of life and thus caused it to participate in the eternity and indestructibility of ideas in general. According to Plato, the descent of the soul into the physical world is the consequence of an intellectual fall through sin, a paralysis of the wings of the soul, striving to attain the heights of the essential truth, beauty and goodness.

But of that, which it has seen once, the soul, even after it has been dragged down by its weight of earth, retains certain memories; ordinarily dark and unconscious, these can be elevated into consciousness by the perception of the earthly images



## Religion and Historic Faiths

of those heavenly forms; then and there, longing for its higher home awakens in the soul and with it, the love of that which is from above, the ideals of the true, the beautiful and the good. That is the "Eros," the "mediator between god and man, the divine demon" or savior-spirit, which lifts us out of the close and narrow life into the realm of the ideal. For, herein Plato is entirely in accord with the Orphics, man has need of a salvation. Though the visible world be an image of the world of ideas, yet the image is distorted, disfigured and clouded by time and space; though there is much good in the world, yet there is much more of evil here below. "Hence one must attempt to fly thither from here as soon as possible. The flight consists in the greatest possible achievement of likeness to God, and that occurs in becoming pious and righteous with insight." Only the knowledge of the righteousness of God and the struggle to achieve likeness to Him is virtue, while it is merely sham virtue to avoid wickedness for the sake of some useful end. If one were to ask whether it is more useful to be righteous than to be unrighteous, the question would be as unreasonable as though one were to ask whether it is better to be well or sick, to have a spoiled and useless or a thorough soul. So unconditioned and so all-surpassing is the inner value of virtue, that the righteous man is to be regarded as happy even though he be misunderstood and persecuted by gods and men, while the blasphemer is miserable even

## The Greek Religion

though he is able to hide his wickedness from both of them. This latter case, however, is actually not thinkable, because the good and the bad get their reward, usually in this life, but if not now, certainly, in any event after death. For just as little as the righteous can be forsaken by God, so it is impossible for the wicked to escape His punishment. When a soul, in accordance with its divine nature, preserves itself pure of the body and prepares itself for death by the persistent striving for wisdom, then it may hope to go to its like, the invisible and eternal and divine, where a like happy lot awaits it, a life of bliss with the gods, free from error and passion and other human ills. But those souls which persisted in clinging to the sensual and hated the spiritual, are held fast to the earth by their low instinct and are dragged to new bodies after death, into human or animal bodies, each after its own kind. Only those souls become of the race of the gods, which have withstood desires of the body and sought salvation and purification through love of wisdom, nourishing themselves by constant contemplation of the true and the godlike.

Thus the Eleusinian and Orphic mysticism is here spiritualized to an ethical idealism, which offers to man, as his highest object and his highest good, the greatest possible likeness to and the most intimate community with God, the prototype and principle of all good; an ethical idealism, which finds the power capable of such elevating, in the divine-

## Religion and Historic Faiths

human spirit of the Eros, the inspired love of that which is from above, the true, good and beautiful. A comparison with Augustine's words: "Because we are created for God, therefore is the heart restless until it finds rest in Him," will be followed by an acknowledgment of the preparation for Christianity, contained in the religion and ethics of Plato.

## XII

### THE RELIGION OF ISRAEL

WE come to the religion of Israel, the prophetic religion in a high sense. Taken according to time and importance, we ought really to have treated it before the other prophetic religions, even before that of Zarathustra. But I have purposely withheld it until now in order not to break the historical connection with later Judaism and with Christianity.

It is a pity that the beginnings of the Israelitish religion, as the beginnings of most religions, are shrouded in deep darkness. The information contained in the Books of Moses concerning those beginnings is legendary; any one who understands how to judge historically in such matters will see clearly that the events could not actually have taken place as they are narrated in the Bible. Two groups of these legends may be distinguished. The first group tells of the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and his sons. These are really myths, originally legends of the gods, in which divine beings or deified heroes, the heroes eponymi of the Israelitish tribes, became men, of whom, in the manner usual

## Religion and Historic Faiths

in epics, human experiences and deeds are reported. We have as little right to search for historical matter in these legends as in the Homeric narrative of the Trojan heroes.

The matter is somewhat different in regard to the second group of legends, those concerning Moses. Here, too, we find ourselves at first, still in the realm of legend. The stories of the exposure and miraculous rescue of the infant Moses have their parallels in the legends concerning the childhood of the Assyrian king Sargon, the Median king Kyros, the Iranian prophet Zarathustra, the Indian hero Krischna and the Greek hero Herakles, the Roman emperor Augustus and the Christian Saviour Jesus,—all legends, which, by their close relationship to one another, betray their origin in the similar motives of ancient folk-poetry. Further, the adventures of Moses in exile, the appearance of God in the burning thorn-bush, the salvation from death in the desert by the penitential blood of the circumcision of his son, then the manner in which, after his return to Egypt, he demands the dismissal of the people of Israel by Pharaoh, the miracles which he performs, the miracle of the rescue of the Israelites at the Red Sea, the giving of the law on Mount Horeb in personal dialogue with God, finally the wandering of the people in the desert, where two million souls are supposed to have found sustenance for forty years—all of this, by its own inner improbability, betrays its late legend-

## The Religion of Israel

ary character. To this must be added the historical data recently furnished by the Egyptian clay-tablets found in Tellamarna, the residence of the heretical King Amenophis IV, who lived about 1400 B.C., and whom you will probably remember from the history of the Egyptian religion. One of his vassals writes from Jerusalem (which was in existence even at that time) begging for help against the Chabiri, a martial nation who had forced themselves into Canaan. If, as is etymologically very probable, the Chabiri are identical with the Hebrews, it follows that they had forced themselves into Canaan about 1400, that is, long before Ramses II, during whose reign (about 1250) the two cities of Ramses and Pithom, for which the Israelites were forced to perform slave-services (according to Exodus i, 11) were built. Then, too, in an inscription of the reign of Merneptah, the son and successor of Ramses, under whom the exodus of the Israelites is supposed to have taken place, the Israelites are expressly mentioned among other conquered Canaanitish peoples, in fact, as one of the races whose territory had been laid waste; while, concerning their flight from Egypt and the destruction of the Egyptian host which followed after them, there is no trace either here or anywhere else in the Egyptian monuments. Thus you see that these things could not have taken place as the Bible narrates them. What the actual course of events was, is purely a matter of suppositions.

## Religion and Historic Faiths

Some have thought that the flight of the Israelites from Egypt and the person of Moses are mere fictions. That is going too far; the matter is not as bad as that. As far as the person of Moses is concerned, careful research students of to-day are of one opinion, that, much as legend may have woven fables about him, yet he was a historical figure of great importance. Of what nature is his importance? That is the only question. Was he actually the man who led the great mass of his people out of Egypt? Did he then solemnly receive the laws of God and bring them to his people? That can hardly be accepted. If, however, we observe what is said about him in the "blessing of Moses," (Deut. xxxii,—a very ancient document), certain fundamental features may be recognized. He is there set up as nothing else than the ancestor and prototype of the professional Levitical priesthood, whose "Urim and Thummim" (oracles by lot) were in his hand; that is, as an oracle-priest, he dealt out admonitions and law, as it is customary among nomads, that the priest is at once soothsayer and judge. He did this at the "lawing-well" of Kadesh-Barnea, an oasis, which thereupon became a place of oracles and law for those of the nomadic tribes which roamed about the north-Arabian steppe in its vicinity. In harmony therewith, is the statement that Moses was the son-in-law of the Midianite priest-prince Jethro and guarded his sheep on Horeb, where Jehovah, the god of the mountain, re-

## The Religion of Israel

vealed himself to him in a flame of fire (Exodus iii, 1), also, that, acting upon the counsel of his father-in-law later, he chose thorough men from among the people to assist him in dispensing justice, in short, that he established a kind of organization of legal procedure, the beginnings of a civil order among the nomadic tribes of the steppe. (Exodus xviii, 13.) Hence, we may picture Moses, for ourselves, as a priest and a judge, who, in the name of the god Jehovah, whom he had learned to know from the Midianites (and Kenites), dealt out oracles and justice for some of the Israelitish nomadic tribes, and therewith laid the foundation for their religious-political alliance, out of which, in due time, grew the unity of "the people of Israel." That much I hold to be historically probable; I do not dare to say anything as to the relation which it may have to the legend of the exodus from Egypt and Moses's part as leader in that departure; later legend has so enveloped the historical kernel that it is doubtful whether it ever can be brought to light again.

More important, however, is the question: What was that god originally, that Jehovah, in whose name Moses dealt out oracles and legal decisions and under whose protection the allied tribes of the Sinai peninsula journeyed to the north and forced their way into Canaan? Jehovah was the god of Mount Horeb or Sinai, and his seat is thought to be there even in later days. The song of Deborah,



## Religion and Historic Faiths

probably the oldest piece of writing in the Bible, (Judges v), describes him as coming from there:

"Jehovah, when thou wentest forth out of Seir,  
When thou marchdest out of the field of Edom,  
The earth trembled, the heavens also dropped  
Yea, the clouds dropped water.  
The mountains flowed down at the presence of Jehovah,  
Even yon Sinai at the presence of Jehovah, the god of  
Israel."

Hence he was the god of the mountain, and of the lightning and thunder-storms which raged about it—the lightning was his weapon in war, the thunder his fearful voice, (Psalm xviii), the cloud of fire his form of appearance in the desert. So, you might ask, was Jehovah no more than a nature-power personified, just as the gods of other peoples? Truly, that is what he was originally, but that he became in the course of time something so incomparably different and higher is not to be explained from his original meaning but from the history of his people; the God of Israel acquired his content and his importance in and with the history of his adherents; he is specifically a historical god. The process of that becoming forms the subject matter of the history of the religion of Israel.

First, we must note carefully that the immigration of the Israelitish tribes did not occur at one time, as the later legend said it did, but that it occurred gradually and from various districts. While those tribes which entered into the middle and north of Canaan, under the leadership of

## The Religion of Israel

Ephraim, came over the Jordan, the Judaeans of the south, from the neighborhood of Kadesh-Barnea (where they were originally native) gradually pushed on to the north in the direction of Jerusalem. In the early days, those were two separate streams, which did not unite until the time of David; before that time they were separated by a belt of fortified Canaanitish cities which the Israelites were unable to conquer, being technically weaker in the art of war. On the flat land only did the Israelitish nomadic tribes first gain a foothold; they did not drive out the Canaanitish natives dwelling there, but they settled among them, entered into peaceful, neighborly relations with them and learned the works of civilization from them, especially husbandry and vine-growing. The natural consequence of this mingling of Israelites and Canaanites was a mixing of the religious notions and customs of the two peoples. The Israelites, having become peasants, could no longer rest satisfied with their former nomad-religion and its poverty of rites for the worship of God; they could not avoid celebrating the local festivals with their Canaanitish neighbors, at which the Baals, the gods of the separate valleys, were worshipped as the lords of the earth and the givers of its fruits. There was no one Baal who was the god of all the land of Canaan, but each separate district had its particular Baal, that means master, and to him the district owed the fruitfulness of its soil. Thus the

## Religion and Historic Faiths

Israelites, now become peasants, were brought under the lordship of the Baals, the district and fertility gods of Canaan; but that does not mean that they had forsaken Jehovah, the God of their nomadic period. He was still the God common to the allied tribes, under whose name and protection the victorious advance upon Canaan had been successfully carried out; none the less was he the God of the mountain, dwelling for the most part on Sinai it was thought, active periodically and intermittently, as experience showed. Whenever war broke out, Jehovah would hurry down from Sinai to aid his people; like a storm-wind he would sweep through the land, inspire his heroes, gather his hosts and lead them to battle and to victory. After the victory had been won and the returning host, scattered to their various localities, took up once more their peasant-tasks, the martial god of Mount Sinai had nothing to do with them, but his place was taken by the Baalim, the nearer gods of the fruitful soil. That was not really a "desertion of Jehovah" as the later historians were wont to describe it, for, at that time, the opposition of the Jehovah worship to the Baal worship was not so mutually exclusive as later on, but one existed alongside the other; they were mutually complementary. The belief in and worship of Jehovah, however, had its ebb and its flood-tides, and these variations corresponded to the changes in the external conditions of the Israelites.

This condition of mixed religions lasted during

## The Religion of Israel

the entire period of the judges and the older kings. All of the ceremonies, especially the festivals, give evidence of it. The three principal festivals of the Israelites were the Spring-festival of the unleavened bread (the first barley-harvest), the Summer-festival of the wheat-harvest and the Autumn-festival of the vintage—all of them agricultural festivals, which the Israelites could not have celebrated in the desert, but acquired after they settled down as peasants. The Pesach (Passah) was the one festival which they had retained from their nomadic stage and that one they preserved; originally it had been the Spring-festival of the nomads at which the first-born of the lambs were offered and eaten as a sacrificial-meal. This nomad festival, corresponding almost exactly in time, was now united with the peasant festival of unleavened bread; at a later time the union of differing customs was artificially explained by the legend of the exodus from Egypt, in commemoration of which the Passah was supposed to be celebrated,—an instructive example of the use of a religious legend as the subsequent interpretation of ancient customs which had become unintelligible. The same holds true of the sacred places. In previous times, the nomadic tribes had been wont to gather once a year at some common sanctuary, some place of oracles and of judgments, such as Kadesh-Barnea, and, during their wanderings, they had no other sacred places. In the land of Canaan, however, they found a number of

## Religion and Historic Faiths

such places of worship: in every district, there were sacred trees, sacred wells and sacred stones, in which, according to the belief of the inhabitants, there dwelt divine beings, who revealed themselves there. What else could the Hebrews do but seek oracles in the same places and celebrate their festivals there? In early days, that was not considered impious; Jehovah and the Baalim were impartially worshipped alongside one another at the same places. Later on, the strict servants of Jehovah became suspicious of such worship and yet they could not prevent it at the popular sanctuaries. What was to be done? The old sanctuaries were maintained, but a new meaning was given to them; the local legends of Canaan were changed into the patriarchal legends of the Israelites. The grove of Mamre or Hebron, the well of Beersheba, and the stone of Bethel were now supposed to have achieved their sanctity through the facts that in the early days, these were the places at which Abraham, Isaac and Jacob had rested and received divine revelations, and they had established places of worship to the God of Israel there.

Thus, the Israelitish poets who composed the pious legends annexed the ancient sanctuaries of Canaan for Jehovah, the God of their people. The same thing has happened repeatedly in the history of the Christian Church; when Christianity spread abroad among the pagan peoples, it transformed the places sacred to the gods and heroes of the heathens

## The Religion of Israel

into chapels of its own saints, and yet, in so doing, it was not able to suppress the old heathen rites entirely, but had to suffer them to continue under Christian labels. In ancient Israel, the same thing happened. These Canaanitish places of worship were equipped with idols, the Asherahs and Masseboth, which were stone pillars or wooden poles, and were looked upon as images or dwelling-places (fetishes) of the local deity. The Israelites retained these idols, giving them the new relation to Jehovah. Besides, they had their "ark of Jehovah," which was carried along in military expeditions, but, at other times, was stationed in a sanctuary, in early days at Silo, and later at Jerusalem. By and through the ark, the effective power of Jehovah was in some mysterious manner supposed to be present. Hence the fear that the aid of Jehovah has been lost, when, after an unfortunate battle, the ark falls into the hands of the Philistines. But Jehovah showed himself to be loyal to his people: by means of dire plagues, the Philistines soon learned that it was not safe to hold that ark and they sent the uncomfortable visitor home again as rapidly as they could.

A remarkable legend is told which shows how crudely realistic was the notion of the attachment of the miraculous power of the God and the visible symbol of worship. A similar idol was that image of a bull, erected at Dan and Bethel, places of worship in the kingdom of Ephraim, and set up by kings who were believers in Jehovah; nobody took

## Religion and Historic Faiths

offense. Jehovah was represented by the image of the bull, exactly as the other Semites were wont to depict their gods by the same image; not until later did the prophets condemn this as idolatry. Finally, the mixing of the two religions found peculiar expression in the name of God itself. The uncertain multiplicity of the individual local gods and spirits was subsumed under the collective idea of the Elohim (world of spirits, deity) and this was identified with Jehovah, by a combination of the two names into one—Elohim-Jehovah. Was that intended to convey that Jehovah had been merged into the Elohim? Or that the Elohim had been absorbed by Jehovah? For the mass of the people, the answer would be doubtful for a long period of time, but finally, Jehovah emerged from the contest alone, the victor. What causes helped to bring about that result?

On the part of certain puritanical extremists descended from the Kenitic nomads (later known as Rechabites and resembling the Nazarites) there had been a powerful opposition from early days against the entanglement of the Israelites in the culture and religion of the Canaanites. They were a sect of ascetics opposed to civilization; they maintained that the primitive nomadic life on the steppes was the ideal truly pleasing to God. They dwelt in tents, not in houses; they were not engaged in agriculture and they drank no wine. It was an energetic reaction against the doubtful "blessings

## The Religion of Israel

of culture," which, naturally, could not succeed in this extreme form; nobody dreamed of exchanging the settled life of the peasant by a return to the nomadic existence of the poor shepherd. However, the rise of these peculiar dreamers acted as an earnest reminder of the old simple and sober nomadic life with the heavens for a roof and the sole protection of the stern God of the desert, the terrible God of war, Jehovah. A deeper impression was made by the appearance of the Nebiim who were not, in the beginning, what we understand by the word prophets, but were, rather, ecstatic visionaries who wandered through the land in companies after the fashion of the Corybantes or the native Dervishes and created the impression of being possessed or inspired by their mad actions. There were similar characters among the Canaanites (as there were also in many of the nature-religions) and their appearance among the Israelites may perhaps be traced to them; but from the beginning, they achieved greater importance among the Israelites because they became the bearers of the national religious inspiration during the times of greatest oppression at the hands of the Philistines. Wherever the great mass of lazy or cowardly Israelites were about to yield or compromise, there these inspired men appeared, and in the name of Jehovah roused the courage for the cause of national elevation and freedom, so that Jehovah seemed to speak through them and promise his assistance. The



## Religion and Historic Faiths

consequence of this exaltation was that development of national power which came in the time of Saul and David and finally meant the victory of Jehovah over the Baals of Canaan.

Of more importance, however, for the religion of Israel, was the activity of the two allied opposition parties, the puritans and the prophets, in the days of Ahab. When King Ahab introduced the Tyrian worship of Baal in Samaria in order to please Jezebel, his Phœnician wife, the pious servants of Jehovah feared that the rise and spread of this strange worship might lead, in the end, to the extirpation of the national worship of Jehovah. At this critical juncture rose the powerful figure of the prophet Elijah the Tishbite. He openly opposed the King and combatted his misrule, both from the religious and the ethical standpoint. For Ahab had not only placed the worship of the strange idols on the same level with that of Jehovah, but he had oppressed the poor, he had increased his lands by illegal and forcible means, as the well-known story of the vineyard of Naboth proves. Thus it was the religious and the moral conscience which urged Elijah the prophet to enter into opposition to the King and give testimony for Jehovah as the one God of justice and of righteousness. Persecuted by the King and the priests of Baal, the prophet was forced to fly. He escaped to Mount Horeb, the dwelling-place of his God, and there experienced a miraculous revelation. Outside of the cave in which he had spent

## The Religion of Israel

the night, there raged a powerful wind-storm, a great and strong wind rent the mountains and broke the rocks in pieces, but Jehovah was not in the wind ; then came an earthquake, but Jehovah was not in the earthquake ; then came a fire but Jehovah was not in the fire ; then a soft murmur was heard, and Elijah covered his face with his mantle. Stepping out of the cave, he heard a voice which asked him : What doest thou here, Elijah ? Then the prophet made his complaint that he has been jealous in the cause of Jehovah, but that he alone of all the loyal ones was living and that now even his death was sought. But Jehovah consoles him : " Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal." (I Kings, xix, 10 seq.)

The life-work of Elijah was a turning-point in the history of the religion of Israel, similar in its consequences to those which followed the appearance of Zarathustra in Iran. As the latter, so Elijah forced the people to a decisive choice between the lying gods or the one God who alone is true because he is the God of justice and of righteousness : " How long halt ye between two opinions ? If the Lord be (the true) God, follow him : but if Baal, then follow him." (I Kings, xviii, 21.) It was the ethical idea of God matured in the soul of the prophet by the need of his time which broke through with irresistible power to the demand for a final choice between Jehovah, the holy God, and the

## Religion and Historic Faiths

unholy nature-gods of the heathen. Therewith Jehovah, the God of the people of Israel, became the God of the moral world-order who alone could lay claim to the right of rulership and who soon was recognized as truly the one.

In the path opened up by Elijah followed the prophets of the eighth century, of whom we have written documents, and they became the creators of an ethical monotheism from which even a Moses and a David had been far removed. Amos preached to the unthinking Israelites that they should not brag of the protection of Jehovah as long as they made themselves unworthy of it by their unrighteousness; that he himself is not bound to any one people, the stranger peoples stand under his rule and must serve as rods for the chastisement of his disloyal people. With powerful words, he thunders against the semblance of piety of their external worship of God: Not the burnt offerings, nor the peace offerings, nor the noise of songs, is pleasing to God; "but let judgment roll down as waters and righteousness as ever flowing streams; seek the good and not the bad, then ye shall live, thus (alone) shall Jehovah be with ye as ye say." Hosea's saying is well known: "Not sacrifices but mercy and judgment do I desire." Mercy and judgment! With them a softer note is heard; not only righteousness in the legal sense, but active humanity is demanded by the religion of Jehovah, in whose ethical nature, for the first time there appears through the agency

## The Religion of Israel

of Hosea the milder features of forbearance and forgiving grace.

Soon after these two prophets who were active in the kingdom of Ephraim, Isaiah appears at the court of the Kings Ahaz and Hezekiah in Jerusalem. He too thunders against the "lying sacrifices" and the pseudo-pious worshippers whose hands are full of blood; instead of which he demands the service of God by righteous living: "Put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do well, seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow." Thus, the qualities by which Jehovah is to be worshipped through service are humanity, brotherliness, and readiness to help. You see, therefore, that it is the social-ethical conscience born in this prophet of the pressure of bad social conditions that creates the higher ideal of God. But this ideal found so little response that Isaiah declares in bitter pessimism that the obstinacy of this people is the cause of his mission. (vi. 9, seq.) The opposition of a stolid world serves only to increase his confidence in God; above the gloom of the present his prophetic, hopeful vision lifted itself to a more glorious future wherein his people, now wandering in darkness, will see a great light and upon the throne of David there will sit a wonderful hero and prince of peace in whose realm there will be joy without end. (ix, 1, seq.)

Isaiah's favorable influence upon the government

## Religion and Historic Faiths

of Hezekiah was without permanent results. During the reign of his successor, Manasseh, idolatry was at its worst: in Jerusalem, in the very temple of Jehovah, could be seen the Phœnician sacrifice of children and the Babylonian worship of Istar and her sun. Not until the reign of Josiah, the grandson of Hezekiah, did the prophetic religious ideal find practical application through the united efforts of the King and the priesthood. The heathen forms of worship in Jerusalem were abolished and, in order to root out entirely the semi-heathenism of the local forms of worship in the country, all sacrificial services at sanctuaries outside of Jerusalem (on the high places) were forbidden and sacrifices to Jehovah confined entirely to the temple at Jerusalem. At the same time, the prophetic ideal of the religion of Jehovah was fixed in a law-book supposed to have been found in the temple and, without doubt, composed by the priesthood there: it is the law preserved for us in the fifth book of Moses and known as Deuteronomy. Therein the worship of Jehovah as the one God, and the sincere love of him, is set up as the highest principle; upon that, a simple, civil and generally humane system of duties is based—a sound and humane ethics corresponding to the spirit of the prophetic religion. The proclamation of this law, 621 B.C., was the means of making this religion, which had until then lived only in the hearts of the best, the affair of all and a permanent institution.

## The Religion of Israel

Naturally, it was soon seen that laws and the institution of a purer order of divine worship were not sufficient to change the spirit of the people. The masses as well as the priests fell under the illusion that everything was done when the practices laid down by the law for temple-service had been done, that then the help of Jehovah against dangers which might threaten would certainly be forthcoming. Then it was that Jeremiah, the sublimest and most tragical of the great prophetic figures, undertook to combat this illusion and, with a courage that recognized neither high nor low, attacked this false certainty. He warned sharply against the human trust in the temple, which, by immoral life, was transformed into a murderer's den, and called attention to the correct knowledge of the law where the life did not conform thereto; lying prophets was the name he applied to those optimistic preachers of peace who closed their eyes to the approaching judgments and lulled the people and their leaders to rest in fateful security. But, though he saw that there was no escape from the heaviest blows which fate had in store for both city and state, his faith in the permanence of the covenant between Jehovah and his people remained unshaken. Even in the future, he saw, as the last fruit of the impending heavy judgments, a new period of salvation, the dawn of a day when religion would be entirely within man and the knowledge of God would be universal.

## Religion and Historic Faiths

“Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the days that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord; But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.” (Jer. xxxi, 31, seq.)

## XIII

### POST-EXILIC JUDAISM

THE punishments which Jeremiah had prophesied came to pass: Jerusalem was destroyed, the greater number of the Jews carried off into exile to Babylon (586 B.C.). That the religion of Jehovah, however, did not fall at the same time as the Israelitish state is the merit of the prophets who had separated Jehovah from the people of Israel long before, and had recognized him as the God of the moral world-order who reigns as the eternal spirit beyond all the changing fates of nations. Again, during this period of exile, a period of misery, the prophets kept alight the sparks of faith and hope. At this time, we meet two powerful figures, differing fundamentally in the manner of their thought and action, but both of them of greatest influence in the development which followed. Perhaps they might be called the exemplars or fathers of two tendencies which run parallel in the Jewish religion from that time on, which struggle with one another and finally end, the one in Talmudic Judaism, and the other in Christianity. I mean Ezekiel and the second, or Babylonian Isaiah, as we are wont to call the one or more unknown authors of the prophecies in Isaiah, chapters xl-lxvi.



## Religion and Historic Faiths

Ezekiel is the classic type of theocratic priest; with a cool heart, he looks upon the suffering of his people as the righteous, divine punishment for the guilt heaped up by them during their entire past. Their misfortune served him as a means of awakening the feeling of guilt, which he then intensified to such a degree of abject humility that all human striving for happiness, all desire for temporal power and national independence should be broken and choked, in order that the new structure of the priestly state of God might be erected upon the ruins of their national state-existence. His ideal is a community of pious men under the rulership of the priest, the central point is the temple; their greatest care is the legally ordered divine service, and the one task of life is the sanctification of all their members by strict observance of ceremonial regulations and rigid avoidance of all sullyng contact with the heathen. At the beginning of the exile, Ezekiel had designed this program, and one hundred years later, through Ezra's proclamation of the priestly law, it was actually carried out in the Jewish community which returned to Palestine.

How different the spirit we meet in those prophecies of that great unknown "Deutero-Isaiah," written toward the close of the period of exile. He did not seek to break and rule his people, but to console and lift them up; he did not seek to make his people ritually exclusive and narrow their lives, but, rather, in the widest missionary work for true

## Post-Exilic Judaism

religion among all the peoples of the world, he held up for his people the ideal of its historical mission and hope. His first purpose is to arouse and to strengthen in his deeply-bowed people a faith in its own future, a trust in the loyalty of its God, but above and far beyond that stretches his prophetic vision; for he knows—the history of the peoples of the world is the proof for him—that Jehovah is not only the God of Israel but the one Lord of all the world, the Creator of heaven and of earth, the controller of the fate of all peoples; he knows the heathen gods are nothing, images made by folly and by human hands. This one and only God, however, has chosen the little people of Israel, not that they should remain his one possession, but that, as his servant, instrument and herald, they may proclaim the true God to the peoples, that they may become the mediating nation in the divine education of humanity.

Deutero-Isaiah also gives up the thought of temporal rulership, but not in order to set up an exclusively Jewish theocracy in its place. Here Israel's vocation is to come in its stead, Israel's religious mission—the ideal described by Deutero-Isaiah in the wonderful words: "Behold my servant whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth: I have put my spirit upon him; he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not cry, nor lift up nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking

## Religion and Historic Faiths

flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment in truth. He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth; and the isles shall wait for his law." (xlii, 1, seq.) This sheds a new light upon the heavy sufferings which were Israel's fate. Ezekiel's crude criminal-law theory is not a key to the adequate solution of this problem; but in the eyes of a religious philosopher of history—and such name may well be given to our prophet—the suffering of the servant of God appears as the instrument by which he is enabled to attain his highest object, the salvation and redemption of men. In whatsoever manner the words of the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah may be interpreted, this much is certainly clear, that therein the deep thought which has ever stood the test finds expression, that the innocent suffering of the righteous is a sacrifice for the best welfare of all, a purchase price of the salvation of the world.

In the generations which followed the prophets, their great expectations were not realized by events as they occurred. True, Cyrus, the Persian King whom Isaiah greeted as the annointed of Jehovah (Messiah), did give the Jews permission to return from their exile after his conquest of Babylon, 536 B.C.; and the greater portion of the Jews did actually return to their home, but the conditions in and about Jerusalem, for the newly settled colony were very miserable. A political crisis, which shook the foundations of the Persian kingdom

## Post-Exilic Judaism

shortly afterward in the reign of Darius, gave the opportunity for kindling anew the old temporal political messianic hopes and the flames were fed by Haggai and Zechariah, the prophets; heedless of all the experiences of the past, again they gave themselves up to the bold expectation of God's impending judgment upon the heathen and the universal rulership of the Jews: they prepared the golden crown for the Davidic prince, Zerubabel, the Persian governor. The Persian realm, however, survived the crisis and the Jews had to postpone their messianic hopes to some uncertain future day. The temple which had been begun was completed, but the religious inspiration was paralyzed by this new disenchantment. Actual conditions were now looked in the face; peace was made with the neighbors and alliances sought particularly through marriages, with those of their comrades who had remained in Samaria. The Jewish colony which had remained in Babylon—for whom the strict exclusion of their heathen environment was the problem of existence—regarded the action of their brethren as fraught with danger for the religion of Jehovah. They wished for the realization of that plan which Ezekiel and others of like spirit had matured; among them lived the desire for the achievement of the ideal of a Jewish theocracy on the soil of the sacred land of the fathers.

To this end, Ezra, the priest and scribe, arranged all of those sketches and studies into a new "Mosaic

## Religion and Historic Faiths

law book" and gained permission of Artaxerxes, the Persian King, to introduce it officially at Jerusalem. Accompanied by a large caravan of Jewish exiles from Babylon, he arrived at Jerusalem 458 B.C. Soon thereafter, he began the purging of the people of God of all foreign elements and his exclusion of the heretical Samaritans was so rigorous that he did not even hesitate at the dissolution of the existing mixed marriages. In order to protect his work against the forcible entry of the neighbors whom he so ruthlessly insulted, he tried to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem; but this attempt failed because the governor of Samaria had induced the Persian king to forbid it. That was a heavy blow for the authority of the priest Ezra; his hopes for the introduction of the new priestly law seemed to be blighted for years. Finally help did come to him again from the Persian court where the Jewish cupbearer, Nehemiah, had used his position in order to obtain from the king his own commission as governor of Jerusalem and the permission to build its walls. By his wisdom and the power of his personality, he was able to win the people over for himself and Ezra. After the reconstruction of the walls had been finished, he called a general gathering of the people and they called upon Ezra to read his law book. The impression was so powerful that the whole people, with the exception of a few single priests whose opposition was swept away by the enthusiasm of the mass, at once followed the

## Post-Exilic Judaism

example of Nehemiah the Governor, binding themselves by their signatures to obey the priestly law of Ezra. This solemn deed, 445 B.C., was the beginning of the Jewish priest-state. As in the case of the later copy, the Roman papacy, this was the result of an alliance of the priesthood with the royal power.

In its original form the priestly law book has not survived, but the contents have. Later periods added to it older laws and writings of historical or legendary content, forming in its entirety the five books of Moses (Pentateuch) which makes up the beginning of the Old Testament canon. This work, which does not contain a single line by Moses himself, is an artificially wrought collection of writings from about five centuries and reflects the various planes of the development of the religion of Israel and Judah in the period between Solomon and the last of the Persian kings. The priestly law book is differentiated from Deuteronomy, which had been promulgated under Josiah in 621 B.C., by the absence of civil and ethical regulations and the exclusive attention to the arrangement of the priestly hierarchy and their ceremonial functions, as well as the ordering of the observances by which Jewish life became sanctified, that is, by which it should become separated from other people. It may, perhaps, be said that the priestly law of Ezra is the epitome of the religion of the average man among the Jews in the exile. Their strong feeling of guilt

## Religion and Historic Faiths

expressed itself through the mass of penitential sacrifices and new ceremonies, such as the Day of Atonement, upon which the sins of the people through the whole year are put on the back of the scape-goat and considered done for when the scape-goat has been driven off into the wilderness. This crude rite revived the animistic notion of sin and guilt as evil, material in its nature and therefore removable by sensuous means; all of which acquires the new sanction under the guise of ancient revelation.

The same holds true of the complicated laws for purification, particularly those relating to clean and unclean animals; in them the "taboo" of the nature-religion is raised to the level of a most important matter of conscience and becomes a command of the holy God of Israel. Every one can see how far this priestly god, who bothers about such miserable stuff, falls below the ethical idea of God enunciated by the great prophets. This decline into a semi-heathen ritual religion, glorified only by the halo of a divine revelation to Moses, can be explained only by the condition of Jewish worship during the exile; the Jews felt the need of emphasizing and preserving their separateness as against their heathen environment, and, lacking a system of worship employed such external rites as abstinence from the eating of pork, strictest observance of the Sabbath, circumcision, and the like. Thereby, these things which had been naïve popular customs be-

## Post-Exilic Judaism

fore and which had not been matters of deep concern, now assumed the value of works and sacred duties peculiarly pleasing to God, the performance of which represented membership in the Jewish church. Thus, at the cost of making it mechanical and, in half-heathenish fashion, material, the prophetic Jehovah religion was preserved.

However, this was only one side of the post-exilic Jewish religion. Within the hard shell of external legality, the better spirit of the ideal religion of the prophets did live on and produced new and valuable fruit. At the same time that the sensuous sacrificial services which were so little to the taste of the prophets were being carried on with ever-increasing pomp at the temple, there arose the spiritual service of God without sacrifice, through scriptural edification in the synagogue. Where formerly the prophetic belief in God had been the possession of a few individuals, now it could be acquired by all the members of the Jewish congregation as their personal conviction and spiritual attitude. The most beautiful fruits of this internalization and application of religion to the experiences of man's daily life were the Psalms and the wisdom books (Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Job). Their ideal of piety is not the ritualistic saintliness of the priestly code, but a clean heart and noble deed in the fear of and the trust in God. They alone who have this are true servants of God and as such they know themselves to be separated by a deep



## Religion and Historic Faiths

abyss from the indifferent and the godless who, though they are Jews by birth and in external practices, are really on a level with the heathen. Once having made this difference between true and merely external seeming attachment to the congregation of God, wherein the personal and moral value of the individual was the standard of measure, the religious importance of national boundaries was lost; it could not be overlooked that outside of Judaism also there were pious and good men. It was in this sense that Malachi, the last of the prophets, said that the name of God is great everywhere among the peoples in the East and the West, and in every place pure offerings are sacrificed to him, which means that among the heathen too there were true servants of God. Yea, the author of the Book of Job has even made a non-Jewish man the patient Job, the representative of a purer belief in God as against Jewish prejudices.

With this personal deepening of the religious consciousness, there arose new problems, disheartening enigmas and cruel doubts. So long as religion was thought of mainly as applied to the people as a whole and each one felt himself a participant in its fate through the feeling of solidarity, the fact of experience that the pious man was often the victim of misfortune, and the godless man enjoyed good fortune, was not food for much thought. But now that the pious individual felt himself as the bearer of an unmediated personal relation to God,

## Post-Exilic Judaism

now that ethical self-judgment had deepened and clarified, the serious question arose: How can the misfortune of the pious be reconciled with the rulership of a God who rewards and punishes righteously? This question was the more difficult because the Judaism of that day had no such hope as that of reconciliation in the world to come, for that thought was then either entirely strange or was itself a mere premonition of a dawning problem.

The more worthy of admiration, therefore, is the courage with which the author of the Book of Job struggled with this dark riddle. He has the friends of Job take the usual Jewish belief in retribution and make complaint against the patient man that his miseries must be the punishment for some secret sins. Against this, Job defends himself, for his conscience is free from heavy guilt. He calls God himself to witness and trusts that the true God will once again save the honor of a man sorely misrepresented and enter the lists for him who has been patient in his suffering and firm in his faith through it all. And the poet does actually have God himself appear upon the scene and declare against the suspicions of his friends—suspicions which were the consequence of their belief in retribution—that the pious and patient Job is right. So this belief, in so far as it makes the world's judgment of a man dependent upon his external circumstances, is rejected as irreconcilable with the purer knowledge of God himself; the pious consciousness rises to the inner

## Religion and Historic Faiths

certainty of its community with God which, independent of the chance of external fate, cannot even be shaken by misfortune. This view of the Hebrew poet who wrote the didactic poem called Job, harmonizes completely with that of the probably contemporaneous Greek thinker, Plato; the latter also presents the unconditional value of the ethically good in his picture of the righteous suffering misrepresentation and persecution, yet inwardly happy and certain that the righteous can never be forsaken of God. The same thought is expressed in some of the Psalms; a particularly beautiful example is the seventy-third Psalm whose author, fleeing from gloomy fate, finds refuge in God:

“Nevertheless I am continually with thee:  
Thou hast holden me by my right hand.  
Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel,  
And afterward receive me to glory.  
Whom have I in heaven but thee?  
And there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee.  
My flesh and my heart faileth:  
But God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.”

Wherever such an attitude shows itself, we may well call it Christianity before Christ. Average Judaism, however, remained on the standpoint of the utilitarian belief in retribution, and the conflict between this faith and the facts of experience led many a one into that pessimistic, skeptical mood which the “preacher” with his Hellenic training confessed when he said, “all is vanity.”

## Post-Exilic Judaism

From the third century on, Greek enlightenment made its entry among the upper classes of Judea, as it had in all of Asia Minor. For many the tendency to strange culture produced an indifference to the faith and customs of the fathers. In this inclination to things Greek, the thoroughly worldly priest-nobles of Jerusalem went to such an extreme that they offered to help the Syrian King, Antiochus Epiphanes, in his effort at complete Hellenisation of the Jewish people. However, the violence with which this attempt was made awakened the reaction of the national and religious spirit of the people. When the combination of the Maccabean heroes with the pious peasants succeeded in defeating the Syrian army and throwing off the government of the strangers, the Jewish religion was saved from being caught in the threatening snare of the Greek spirit. Then happened what happens everywhere and at all times under such circumstances: the victorious religious inspiration ends in a tremendous ecclesiastical reaction and what had begun in the spirit is completed in the flesh—ritualism, hierarchism, dogmatism, etc. As a further protection against the incursion of heathenism, the Assidæans, the party of the pious which soon became the Pharisees, the party of the “separates,” laid most stress on a strict fulfillment of the law in all its detail and externals. But the written law was not enough for them: a further hedge of school ordinances was built up, making the realm of things

## Religion and Historic Faiths

permitted ever narrower and tightening the net of observances around daily life. No longer was stress laid upon the pious attitude of the Psalms and the life wisdom of the Proverbs but upon legal correctness according to the prescriptions of the Scribes and the Pharisees. In the school of these virtuosos of religion, that tendency noticeable as early as the priestly law of Ezra, which gave ceremonials far greater importance than morals, was carried to such an extreme that the law became an oppressive yoke and the fulfillment of all its demands became an impossible task for the great mass of the working people. Hence these exemplary pious men of the school looked down arrogantly upon the "people of the soil," condemning them as godless because they did not understand aught of the casuistry of the school regulations and because the needs of daily life made it impossible for them to avoid transgressions and impurities. Hence the law became a dividing barrier; not only did it divide the Jew from the heathen, but it divided the Jews among themselves into those who were righteous in the legal sense and the profane mass. The ethical living spirit of the religion of the prophets became a death-dealing letter by this Pharisaical distortion.

But however much the life of the Jews might be enchained and cut off from the rest of the world by this legal discipline of the Scribes, they could not prevent the inpouring of a mass of Eastern and

## Post-Exilic Judaism

Western elements into the thinking of the Jews; thus there was brought about a mixture of Jewish, Oriental, and Greek thoughts which prepared the foundation for a new religious structure of the future. From Babylon and Persia in the East came the speculations concerning divine mediators, concerning the realm of the good and the bad spirits, concerning the resurrection, last judgment, and places of retribution in the world beyond. Divine attributes such as Wisdom, Spirit and Word, were transformed into independent personal mediators between God and the world after the manner of the Persian Amschaspons or archangels. The old idea of the "messengers of God," angels, was expanded into a host of spirits whose leaders have certain specified duties in the government of the world; peoples and individuals have their protecting angels and the phenomena of nature are controlled by angels, an imitation of the heathen nature-gods. As in the Persian religion where the host of good spirits is opposed to the host of bad spirits, so Judaism now acquired the demons which had formerly been meaningless ghosts in the popular belief, and they took on the religious meaning of fallen angels making up an anti-divine realm under their over-lord, Satan. Satan himself, who in the Book of Job had been regarded as one in God's train and played the part of the divine state-prosecutor, the complainant against man, now became the opponent of God and the prince of the mundane realms oppressing the

## Religion and Historic Faiths

divine realm of the Jews. The appearance of sin and of evil in God's good creation was traced back to temptation by Satan, and his demons were looked upon as the originators of all physical and spiritual diseases (possession). The fear of these inimical spirit-powers weighed like a mountain upon the souls of all the men of that time, upon the Jew no less than upon the heathen. But as without doubt the Jews took over from the Persians this idea of a struggle between the divine and the Satanic rule, so they hoped, as did the Persians, that the divine rule would eventually be victorious, that the people of God would be saved and that there would be a universal judgment and a resurrection of the dead.

These pictures of the future are the themes of the Apocalyptic literature which became of supreme importance for the Jewish religion in the last century before and the first century after Jesus. The Book of Daniel, written in the time of the Maccabees, 165 B.C., marks the beginning. It contains a religious philosophy of history dividing the world-period into four parts in imitation of the Persian; its underlying thought is that after the impending downfall of the last heathen world-empire, the Grecian-Macedonian, the eternal empire of the saints, namely the Jews, would begin. The four heathen world-empires had been typified by animal figures and he typifies the coming Jewish divine empire by the figure of a "Son of Man" swaying toward God on a cloud of heaven; probably he

## Post-Exilic Judaism

thinks of a divine Messiah such as is also to be found in the prophecies of the Sibyls and of the Book of Enoch. The old prophetic hope of a messianic period of salvation for the people of Israel thus gets a new direction; it is no longer expected in the natural historical course of events but the government of God is to come from heaven by a sudden miraculous catastrophe which will put an end to all present mundane conditions. That remained the ruling opinion of Judaism and was then taken over by earliest Christianity.

Concerning the person of the expected Messiah, the views always varied, so that at one time he is a supernatural being who shall appear from heaven (Sibyls, Enoch, Ezra), again, he is a human king of the house of David (Solomon, Psalms), and at another time, he is entirely absent and God alone is to rule in the coming æon (Ascension of Moses). The one thing that is not changed is the catastrophic, miraculous character of the coming of God's realm. The character of his kingdom will correspond to its supernatural origin, for though it will be realized on earth, the pious of bygone days will rise from the dead in order to partake of its happiness, as the godless will rise to eternal torment. The hope of resurrection, expressed for the first time in the Book of Daniel, was probably the result of Persian influence, and spread in close connection with the whole belief in the world-judgment and world-renewal. In the later Apocalypses,



## Religion and Historic Faiths

Enoch, Ezra, Baruch, there was added the idea of places of retribution in the world beyond for individual souls: Paradise for the pious and Gehenna or Hell for the godless. The idea of immortality and of a life of bliss or misery for souls after death had been alien to the old Israelitish faith, but in conjunction with the belief in resurrection, it had long existed in the Persian and Egyptian religions, in the Greek Mysteries, and among the Orphic and new Pythagorean societies. It is probable that from them single features of the gay picture of the world beyond, painted in the Jewish Apocalypses, had been taken over.

For beside the Oriental gnosticism, it was Greek religious philosophy which exercised a deep influence upon the religious thinking of the Jews, especially in Alexandria, during the last ante-Christian centuries. The book entitled "The Wisdom of Solomon" is already a product of the mixture of Jewish belief and Greek (Stoic and Platonic) philosophy; but the ripest fruit is preserved for us in the writings of the Jewish philosopher and theologian, Philo of Alexandria, 20 B.C.-54 A.D. By means of a bold allegorical method of interpreting the sacred writings of his people, reading into them the thoughts of Plato and the Stoics, he sought to harmonize the Jewish faith with the Greek trend of thought of his time. Philo's view of the world also was dualistic, but it was not the ruling opposition of the Jewish Apocalypses which set the present world over against

## Post-Exilic Judaism

the future world, but rather the Hellenistic opposition which placed the sensual-visible over against the supersensual-ideal world. According to Philo, God is pure spirit, sublime beyond all the limitations of finiteness, the opposite of the material world, and therefore he cannot work upon it without mediation; yet God is ever-active power and the perfect power from whom all good gifts, and only good, come immediately. For him, evils are merely the recognized activities of subordinate spirits. The mediation between God and the world is accomplished by bodyless powers or ideas or angels; at their head stands the Logos which is both the world ordering reason as well as the personified revelatory word. He is called God's "first-born Son and Image," a "second God," mediator of creation and all historical revelation, high priest and attorney (Paraclete) for men, their teacher, physician, helmsman, guide out of the strange land of earth into the heavenly home. For the human soul, as Philo conforming to Plato teaches, has fallen from its upper world of ideas and been caught in the prison of a mundane body; its task, therefore, is to rise above the world of the senses and free itself so as to go to the world of ideas. Its own power, however, cannot possibly do this, but it can only be accomplished by the divine aid of the mediator Logos (Here you have the theological transformation of the Platonic thought of the saving power of the divine-human "Eros.") It is the Logos who, in

## Religion and Historic Faiths

his merciful sympathy, descends into the souls of men and lifts them out of the stormy sea of the perishable world into community with the divine, consecrating them as temples of God. The Platonic way to salvation, the striving after wisdom (philosophy), acquires, through Philo, a decidedly religious tinge: it is faith which surrenders with humility and joins the train of the Logos upward; he unites us with God; he is the solace of life, the abundance of hope, the only undeniable good, the heir of bliss. And with faith belongs, as the "twin-sister of piety," love. But faith reaches its highest point in that vision which in the moments of ecstatic inspiration enjoys here below and in advance the bliss of the world beyond.

These thoughts were not confined to Philo alone at his time; many of the Jews who came in contact with Greek culture shared them with him. Societies were formed for the common practice of this pious wisdom, for example the Therapeutæ in lower Egypt and the Essenes in Palestine. That was a religious brotherhood which lived a life of labor and ascetic self-discipline in fraternal seclusion,—a late blossoming of those old puritans, the Rechabites, of whom you will remember that I spoke in the last lecture. But they had been modified by the influences of the new Pythagorean and similar religious-social fraternities of the Greek world. The Essenes had the same regard for the laws of Moses and the strict care for ritual purity

## Post-Exilic Judaism

in common with the other Jews; they were differentiated from them, however, by the rejection of bloody sacrifices in the place of which they put their daily baths and their common sacramental meal, but most especially by celibacy and community of possessions. They lived together in fraternity-houses under a hierarchical organization and strict discipline; during the week they busied themselves with the cultivation of the soil or simple handicrafts, while on the Sabbath they gathered together for the common edification, using the sacred writings as interpreted by the best-informed among them. The instruction was intended for the education of the members of the order in piety, purity, temperance, self-control, mercy and benevolence toward the poor and the sick. They gave freely out of the mass of their common store even to those who were not members of the order; besides which they were active as physicians, soothsayers, pastors, and tutors wherever their counsel and their help was needed. What the cynical popular philosophers were to the Greek-Roman world and the Buddhist monks were in India and eastern Asia, that the Essenes were, approximately, in Palestine. We may not doubt but that their influence stretched far beyond the limits of the fraternity and, despite all Pharisaic sanctity dependent upon works, was active in keeping alive that inward piety of the Psalms among the "quiet ones of the land." This was the soil out of which Christianity grew.

## XIV.

### CHRISTIANITY

THE last lecture led us to the threshold of Christianity. Inasmuch as we have but one more hour at our disposal, it will not be possible for me to present the origin and development of Christianity. In fact, I could only repeat what I said last winter in this room in my lectures on Christian Origins. In the meantime, those lectures have appeared in print and I refer you to them, confining myself to-day to a sketch of the faith of the Christian community in the New Testament period.

While doing that, however, we will guard carefully against committing the error so widespread to-day of reading into the biblical documents something they do not contain and of putting aside everything which they do contain that is not entirely agreeable to our modern manner of thinking. It is in such fashion that the well-known Jesus romances originate, shooting up like mushrooms from the ground; we may well grant those poets the privilege of doing such work, but they ought not to lay claim to the credit of telling actual history. Just that which to the modern consciousness is odd,

## Christianity

which in fact seems to offend it, just that usually reveals that which is historically most characteristic—the thing upon which the thorough-going success of the Christian faith at its time rested. Our first task is to grasp and to understand this characteristic in purely objective fashion. Not until then can the further question be asked: What of permanent importance is contained for us in this historically conditioned manner of thinking?

But it is in no wise proper for the historian of religion so to arrange the historical matter that it conforms to the subjective standard of measure set up by himself or by contemporaneous taste; nor may he distort it. What was Christianity as it is presented to us in the New Testament? It was the belief in redemption through Christ; that statement contains the other statement that a "Christianity of Christ" never existed, for Christ could not have believed in his own salvation by himself; that is simply an inner contradiction. Altogether, the Christian faith existed for the first time in the Christian community, wherewith the question what contribution the historical Jesus made thereto remains a matter by itself, which I cannot enter into to-day; my task to-day is only a presentation of the original faith of the Christian Church and I suppose that I may count upon a general agreement when I say that from the beginning Christianity was a religion of salvation. But there had been such religions before it, and one might even say

## Religion and Historic Faiths

that about the time of the change of era almost every religion was, in one way or another, about to take on the nature of a religion of salvation. Therefore the question is this: What was it that constituted the peculiar characteristic of the Christian religion of salvation? Its belief in salvation was the richest and the deepest, for it comprised three fundamental kinds: belief in future salvation, in past salvation, and in present salvation. Each of these forms was represented in some one of the religions or philosophies of that time, but Christianity,—and therein consisted its distinguishing advantage,—gathered all three together into a higher unity and thus occupied a position higher than all the others. It was the reservoir, that sea into which all rivers emptied and in which they flowed together.

First then: that Christianity is a religion of salvation in the sense of the hope of future salvation and that salvation not only and not in the first place of individual beings, but of human society as such, the message of a future salvation, and that, too, to be hoped for in the immediate future, salvation from the present miserable condition of the world,—the message of the dawn of a new world, of the coming of the kingdom of God in which universal peace, happiness and righteousness shall rule,—that was the great message that went forth from Palestine. And it caused a powerful echo, for it came

## Christianity

at the right time. The rule of the Romans had destroyed the glory and throttled the freedom of the ancient peoples; the long civil wars had caused universal uncertainty and lawlessness, a brutalization and degeneration of social conditions had come to pass, and naturally everywhere the misery weighed heaviest on the lowest class of the people, upon the weary and the heavy-laden, upon the poor whom the gospels compare to a scattered, maltreated, and leaderless flock. Hence, throughout all the East and the West, the longing for a new world of peace and of righteousness.

In an inscription from the year 9 B.C., recently discovered at Priene, there is a hymn to the Emperor Augustus which furnishes a capital picture of the mood of that day. It reads:

"This day, the birthday of Augustus, has given a new appearance to all the world which had been a prey to destruction had there not emanated from him now born a universal fortune for all men, the beginning of a new life. Now is the day past when one must grieve that he has been born. Providence has sent this man to us and to coming generations as a savior, he will make an end to all struggle and mould things gloriously. In his appearance the hopes of the fathers are fulfilled. He has surpassed all former benefactors of humanity. It is impossible that a greater one can come. The birthday of the god has led the world up to the messages of joy. For the world, the birthday of the god has led up the messages of joy (evangels) attached to him. From the day of his birth a new reckoning of time must begin."

Such were the hopes which the masses of the people reposed in the deified Cæsars of Rome, and



## Religion and Historic Faiths

how they were disappointed! Though matters went fairly well under Augustus, the disappointment became more and more bitter under his successors. All too soon it became evident that these Cæsars themselves were the incarnation of greed and violence under which the maltreated peoples groaned. Then there came a message from the midst of the people, not political in its import, but greatly treasured in religious regard for the sake of its old revelations and messianic hopes—from Palestine came the wonderful news that a saviour was expected, not an earthly but a heavenly king, who shortly before had dwelt upon the earth as a prophet, a man of the people and a friend of the poor and oppressed, one who took pity on the leaderless flock and promised to the poor, the weeping, and the starving the bliss of the kingdom of God, his satisfaction and consolation—a friend of men, who had taken up the least of them and the rejected as their humane teacher and healing physician; while, on the other hand, he had hurled reproving words at the satiated rich, the arrogantly just and the proud superiors, for which reason, they had rejected and cursed him and, in the end, nailed him upon the cross; but then did God himself miraculously resurrect the crucified one and, elevating him to the heavenly throne, place him on His right hand, whence he is about to return as the victorious savior of his own.

What the Jews had long hoped of their Messiah,

## Christianity

the Persians of their savior, Saoshyant, the Egyptians, the Greeks and the Romans of Serapis, Æsculapius, and Hercules, their deities of salvation, or, finally, even of the deified Cæsars—all of this was here surpassed by the announcement of the divine messianic king of the Christian, he who had been a man and had tasted human sorrow, yea had drained the cup to the very lees, but even now had become more than man, a divine being, equipped with omnipotence, and established as the savior and judge of men. The double nature of this announcement from Palestine, that the savior who would redeem the pious would, at the same time, be the judge of the godless, was of greatest importance for the world of that time. That is what gave to this announcement its forceful, rousing, moral power. Through it the feeling of guilt which has been called into being by the very need of the time was intensified to the extreme; for the certain, the proud and the indifferent, the thought of judgment was a motive to self-examination, reform, purification, and betterment of life. Even in later centuries, after the Church had long given up the hope of a mundane messianic kingdom and an early visible coming of their Lord, the thought of the great day of judgment of the Lord was powerful enough to make them quake inwardly.

"Dies irae, dies illa  
Solvat saecula in favilla,  
Teste David et Sibylla!"

## Religion and Historic Faiths

Now let us ask the question: What importance can this earliest Christian belief in salvation, a hope of an earthly divine kingdom of righteousness, of peace and of joy, have for us to-day? It is self-evident that the supernatural and the catastrophic parts of it fall away for us because history itself has shown that to be an error of the period. Nevertheless, there does remain for us the early Christian belief in the coming of the heavenly kingdom on earth; it remains as a belief in the right and victorious realization of the ethical-social ideals of human society. With this difference: we no longer expect its realization by a miracle descending from heaven, but we find in it the ethical task given to us by God, the task of honestly coöperating in person for the realization of that ideal and we hope that this labor in the cause of the divine purpose of the world must be of service in the history of the world. That is the import of faith in future salvation. The same is true of the belief in a future judgment. Although we no longer believe that Christ will descend from heaven to earth and devote some day to formal judgment, nevertheless, the truth does remain that divine righteousness ever and again, in the grave crises and in the winnowing judgments of national life, has revealed itself and will reveal itself in the future. To our thinking, the single miraculous catastrophe divides into the ever-recurring catastrophes of the life of the peoples, returning accord-

## Christianity

ing to the eternal laws of the order of the world, catastrophes in which that which is impure is destroyed by the test of fire and that alone persists which is genuine, true, and good. "The history of the world is the judgment of the world!"

This future salvation of society was no more important to the men living at the beginning of our era than the hope of a blessed existence in the world beyond for the individual soul. This hope was based upon legends relating certain facts of salvation in the past, in which the guarantee of future bliss was given to those pious souls who had been united to their god of salvation. Of course you remember the legends of Osiris-Isis, Istar-Tammuz, Demeter-Kore, to which must be added Attis-Cybele, Adonis-Aphrodite, and others. As we have repeatedly seen, these legends all revolve about the simple thought of the death and resurrection of nature and the gods governing it. In the myth, the annual experience of the Autumn and the Spring became a poem telling of the one-time fate of the nature-god who died a violent death and returned again to life. And this myth of the past fate of the god was then moved into a timeless present by a corresponding custom, the festal rite, by which the death and the resurrection of the god was annually celebrated. By the ceremonies of this celebration, it was believed that a mysterious community with the god had been achieved so that the wor-

## Religion and Historic Faiths

shipper became a participant in the death-conquering life and thus became certain of a blissful life to come. We have many reports of such festal customs in Egypt, Syria and Phrygia made by Plutarch, Apuleius, Lucian, Firmicus Maternus, and others. Lucian of Antioch, the well-known author, describes the celebration of the Syrian Spring-festival about as follows: When the red anemones blossomed in the Spring and the waters of Orontes were dyed red by the ochre earth of the mountain from which it flows, then it was said that the god Adonis, "the lord," had been torn by the wild boar and killed; and his death was celebrated by wild songs of lamentation sung by the women and the solemn burial of his corpse in the shape of a wooden image. But on the second or, according to other customs, on the third or fourth day after his death suddenly the message sounded on the air: the lord lives, 'Adonis is risen again! Then he (his image) emerged in the body from the grave in which he had been laid and rose in the air (by means of some mechanism—a ceremony which, in the Greek Church and, as I have learned, in some places also in the Roman Catholic Church is customary to this day in similar fashion on Easter night); then according to the report of the Phrygian Attis celebration made by Firmicus Maternus, the priest would anoint the mouth of the lamenting with oil and speak the consolatory words: "Be solaced, ye pious, since the god is saved, salvation

## Christianity

from our distress will be our lot"—just as the Christians sing to this day, "Jesus lives and I live with Him."

Such was the Easter festival as it was annually celebrated in Antioch, the Syrian capital, from of old. To this same Antioch, soon after the beginnings of the messianic community of Jerusalem, men from Cyprus and Cyrene had come and had begun to declare the message of the crucified and resurrected Christ, not only to the Jews but also to the heathen; and the heathen listened to them and some of them became converts to the new lord, Christ. Thus it was that the first mixed community of Jews and heathen was established there, and there, for the first time, the new name "Christians" was given to them as is reported in the Acts of the Apostles, chapter xi, verses 20-26. So the community there was looked upon as something new, something that was neither Jewish nor heathen. What might it have been by which they recognized this? Naturally, it must have been their customs, which must have been other than those of the messianic community composed formerly only of Jews. But from where may these new customs by which this community was recognized as a new community of Christians have come? As religious customs are never created out of nothing, we may well accept it as a fact that the heathen-Christians of Antioch preserved the old customs by which they had previously celebrated the death and resurrec-

## Religion and Historic Faiths

tion of Adonis, their lord, and now transferred them to their new lord, Jesus. Thus it came about of itself that Christ seemed to them to be the lord who achieved the salvation of his own by his death and his resurrection and became the savior of the world. And now the Apostle Paul comes into this new community, having been called for by Barnabas at Tarsus, his native city; he soon felt at home there and his work was so blessed that the community grew visibly. Certainly it was no more than natural that Paul, for his part, permitted the customs and ideas which he found existing in the heathen-Christian community at Antioch—otherwise, how could his activity have been blessed? It was the more natural because everything which he found harmonized exactly with the manner in which he himself had arrived at the faith in Christ. From a fanatical persecutor of the messianic community, Paul had been converted into an Apostle of Christ by the experience of a vision in which he had seen the crucified Jesus as the heavenly Christ and son of God; therefore his death had not been that of a criminal, but a death-sacrifice in which God had given his son for the sake of our sins, so that we might be saved from the present wicked world. About the life of Jesus, the prophet of earth, Paul knew very little, just as little as did the heathen-Christians of Antioch; therefore it was the more natural that he agreed with them in the conviction that the death and the resurrection of Christ, the son of God, was the one

## Christianity

fact of redemption and the content of the new religion of salvation.

In his theology, Paul further developed and grounded this belief. For him, Christ is no longer the prophet and the struggling hero of a Jewish messianic realm, as the early community thought, but for him, he is the suffering hero of a mystical salvation of the world, his death is a guilt offering for the reconciliation of God and the forgiveness of human guilt, his resurrection the conquest of the powers of death and of hell, the victorious resurrection of the divine life, the beginning of a new humanity vivified by the spirit of God. In the well-known passage, I Corinthians, xv, he cries triumphantly "Death is swallowed up in victory. O death where is thy sting? O grave where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!" Thus the gospel of Paul became the preaching of the crucified and resurrected mediator, the Lord who is the spirit, the Lord of the living and the dead. This victor over death and hell, it is evident, can no longer be an earthly man, the "Christ after the flesh," for he was buried and remained in the grave, but that which now lives is, according to Paul, something much higher, it is the Lord, the spirit which maketh alive and maketh free God's first-born Son, the man from heaven, the second Adam from whom a new humanity took its beginning; in



## Religion and Historic Faiths

a word, it is the ideal man in whom there is neither Jew nor Greek, but all are one, in whom the idea of man is resurrected to life. This divine man, so Paul teaches, God sent down to earth, had him take on a body of sinful flesh, so that he should suffer death and, by his guiltless vicarious suffering and dying, take the sting from death, pay its tribute to sin, render justice to the law, but therewith and at the same time do away with all of these evil powers once for all, break their yoke and loosen their fetters, overcome death for all, and bring life and immortal existence for all.

The Christian message of salvation by means of the sacrificial death of Christ, the Son of God, was powerful in its effect upon the heathen world. The penitential rites, by which the intensified feeling of guilt of the period sought to find some relief, the ceremonies of the mysteries which were piously entered into as the death and resurrection of a mythical god in order to hold a guarantee of one's own salvation and beatitude—all of this found fulfillment here; nay more, it was far surpassed. It was fulfilled, for here, too, was a superhuman, a heavenly being which God himself had made into a sacrifice in order to purchase therewith the salvation of the world. This being, however, had not suffered death as a natural fate, as in the case of the mythical gods; in free obedience, and out of love, Christ, the Son of God, had given up his earthly life so as to save the world; it was the ethical deed of self-

## Christianity

sacrifice on the part of a divine man which had saved humanity from sin, the law, death and the devil, which had robbed the old ritual and mythical services of sacrifice and atonement of their value and had created the new tie of the community with God in the spirit of childship. In this way, it is possible to comprehend the wonderful and all-subversive effect of Paul's preaching of the crucified and resurrected Lord, Jesus; without that, the victory of the Christian faith over the heathen world would hardly be thinkable.

It is a different matter, however, when we turn to the question: What meaning has this faith in a past salvation through the sacrificial death of Christ for us to-day? Naturally, there is much to be said on this subject, and our time limits to-day force me to confine myself to a few suggestions. I think that what was said before concerning the belief in a future salvation, will be found to be applicable here: that which was mythical and supernatural in the form of the early Christian belief naturally drops away, while the kernel of the truth cannot but persist. What else can this truth be than the eternal law of the world-order, that through death is the way to life, that the "old Adam," the sensual, selfish human being, must die if the divine, spiritual self of the personality, the son of God within us, is to be and to do. The other truth, also, will remain, that as in all previous times, the salvation of humanity and acquisition of all permanent means of re-

## Religion and Historic Faiths

demption, rested upon the moral sacrifices of obedience and of love, made by the individual for the good of all, so in the days to come salvation will require the same foundation. Here, too, for our thinking, the one-time miracle of the myth, the sacrificial death of a unique supernatural Son of God, breaks up into a series of repeated happenings; namely, the endless, historical series of all the sacrifices of men, who demonstrated thereby that they were true children of God, urged by the spirit of God, thoughtless of themselves, but in active and suffering love, surrendered themselves for the salvation of men, for the good cause of God and His kingdom. Upon these sacrifices of obedience, fidelity and love made by generation after generation, finally rests all the progress of humanity, the salvation of man from the fetters of the crude nature-powers, the acquisition of all permanent ideal possessions which make life worth the living. The *history* of the world, therefore, is not only the *judgment* of the world, but it is, also, the *salvation* of the world. That is the truth of the gospel of Paul, which can not be eliminated from Christianity without fatally mutilating it. For this Pauline proclamation of a past salvation has demonstrated itself historically to be the way that did lead beyond the mere hope of a future salvation which grew more and more problematical with each year of the delay in its fulfillment, up to a certainty of present and inner salvation.

## Christianity

How can a salvation which is regarded as a thing completed in the past, become an efficient experience of the present? The answer to this question had been prepared in many ways and Christianity again had but to enter into the orchards and gather the ripe fruit. The rites of the mysteries served to transport the votaries into a present and a permanent union with the God of salvation. The bond of union was partly established by calling the name of the God of salvation, in which name all of his power to bless was mysteriously hidden; again, rites of purification and immersion designed to bring about the actual wiping-away of sin and guilt and all things demonic were employed; finally, they ate consecrated food and drank consecrated draughts in the belief that the life of the god was actually present in the body in them, so that in, with and through the sensuous matter, the votary seemed to have taken on the god's body. Hence, those who had been consecrated by those rites spoke of themselves as "reborn forever" (*renatus in æternum*).

It would have been marvellous if these rites had not forced their entry into the Christian community. Certainly, Paul was not the first one to introduce them; without doubt he found that they were being employed by the community of Antioch. Thereupon he brought them into closest relation to his doctrine of Christ and salvation and gave them a deep, ethical-religious meaning, far beyond any ideas which had been attached to those rites by the

## Religion and Historic Faiths

heathen. Baptism took on the meaning of the implanting of Christ's death and resurrection for the purpose of participation in both: the former man of sin is buried by the immersion and the new man rises to life with God and for God, a life no longer ruled over by sin and death. The primitive Christian love-feast took on the mystical meaning of the eating and drinking of the body and blood of Christ, whereby a community of love and life is established between the head and the members and between one member and the others. By these sacramental means, just that is represented and performed which belief in Christ's name in itself is, namely, a being in Christ, a state of being filled with his spirit by which the believer becomes what Jesus, the Son of God, was. "Ye are all sons of God through the faith in Christ Jesus." The connection with Christ is so close that Paul can say: "No longer do I live, but Christ lives in me." "If one be in Christ, then is he a new creature, the old is departed, behold he is become new." Above all, for this new man, there has passed away the world of the law with its literal observance of the ordinances, the threats and the curses resting upon transgressors—all of that is done away with; it does not hold for such as have become new men in Christ, free men of the spirit. For "the Lord is spirit and where the spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom." Consequently, the spiritual man is first of all a free man, who has within himself the source of true knowledge and the motive

## Christianity

power of good. "Love is the fulfillment of the law"; the holy spiritual motive takes the place of external force. The same holds of knowledge: "The spiritual man judges all and is judged by none," for "the spirit, which is given to us, searches all, even the deeps of God." In this close community of spirit with God, which is the faith according to Paul, all unfreedom ceases and heteronomy and subordination under strange ordinance and authority have ended; this faith is not a blind acceptance, it is the voluntary surrender of the heart to the experience within and clear recognition of the will of God, who seeks our salvation; it is the truly "reasonable service of God."

Therefore, John can also say: "This is life eternal that they should know Thee, the only true God and him whom thou didst send, Jesus Christ." The knowledge of God after its revelation in Christ, that is eternal life, the salvation now present. According to John, it is true, Christ is not identical with the man Jesus, but something far more comprehensive: the eternal word of God or the Logos, which had been with God from the beginning and had been the power through which all things came into being, the life of the world and the light of men,—which had revealed itself in a unique and miraculous manner in Jesus but did not confine itself to his mortal existence, and after Jesus reveals itself ever anew in that spirit which leads the community on in truth. For this reason, the belief in Jesus, that

## Religion and Historic Faiths

eternal Logos and Son of God, means present possession of eternal life, according to John. The believers "have even now gone over from death to life and taste of death no more"; their faith is the power which has overcome the world. That does not imply that the world is devoid of value and reality for the Christians as it is for the Buddhists; but rather, the world is the object of a positive moral task, the material which is to be shaped by the activity of a patient and serving love into the kingdom of God. The love, which Philo had called the twin-sister of faith, is, according to Paul, the active energy of faith and the most precious gift of grace, which will never fail though prophecies, tongues and knowledge shall cease. (I Cor. xiii, 8). And John condenses the entire substance of the Christian faith in that deep saying: "God is love, and whoso is in love, is in God and God in him." If it is faith which makes man the master of all things and frees him from those things which otherwise enslave him, it is love which unites him to the whole and makes him the voluntary servant of all. Thus faith and love are the actual salvation of the present, bridging the past revelations of the divine spirit with the hoped-for coming fulfillment and completion.

The mythical ideas of past and present miracles were naturally the outer form of the belief in salvation, necessary for the old Church as they are for many men to this day; but, from the beginning,

## Christianity

they were merely the shell, in which lay hidden the actual experience of the present redeeming power of faith and love. Though we of to-day can no longer hold these mythical notions to be literal truth, we may well recognize them as symbols and means of representation of the permanent truth of the Christian idea of salvation. Let us be careful that we do not lose the ideal content, or lessen or weaken it by an all-too-hasty throwing aside of the symbolical shell, before we have actually grasped their deep meaning. If, from the beginning, the Christian community went beyond the earthly life of the Jewish prophet Jesus, and, for the actual object of their faith took the heavenly man, the eternal Son of God, the divine Logos which is the light of all men—truly, it was no chance inquisitiveness but it was an inner necessity; it was the involuntary recognition of the cardinal truth that the redeeming power is not a temporal thing, not even the most excellent man, but that it is the eternal divine human spirit of the true and the good. That alone can become an immediate inner experience for us; that alone can produce an unconditioned certainty, free from all temporal and finite limitations; that alone can be a universally-valid norm and authority for all men. This divine-human spirit is the truth that frees and the love that binds, opening the heart to it with a faith that knows, consecrating to it a life of active labor, of serving love, and of waiting with patience and hope—that is the actual



## Religion and Historic Faiths

salvation of the present for which all the figures and stories and legends and poems of the past are but means of visualization, symbols and parables: "The finite is ever an image."

The Christian belief in salvation gathered up in itself all the truths contained in the religions and the philosophies of its time. With the religions of the mysteries, Christianity shares the mystical enthusiasm, that uplifted and intensified feeling of being-in-God and the implied hope of a blissful beyond; it converted the mystical means of salvation into symbols of a moral rebirth and of brotherly love. With the philosophy of its time, Christianity shares the reasonable worship of God in moral knowledge and practices. Again, it shares with Buddhism, the abnegation of self and the world, the quiet peace of resignation; and also, with the religion of Zarathustra, it shares a courageous struggle against godlessness of every nature and a joyous hope of the victory of God's cause in the world. With Judaism, Christianity shares belief in the one sublime and holy God, the judge of men and of nations, and in the coming of his kingdom on earth; but with Plato, it shares also belief in that God, who is the highest good and the unenvying source of all that is true and good, as also belief in the divine mediator Eros, that power of inspiration resident in us, and love of those ideals coming from above. With the Stoics, finally, Christianity shares that inner freedom from the world, the calmness of

## Christianity

firm character, the power of self-determining will (autonomous) and the liberality of the humanitarian idea which reaches out over all nations and all classes; but it gives life to this cold and proud virtue of the Stoics by belief that the world is God's, and by love which renders the service of brothers a joy, and by the hope that all struggle and all suffering misery of the time will one day be resolved into the peace of eternity.

Thus it is that Christianity became the religion of the religions, conquered the old world and led up to the new.

## XV

### ISLAM

ISLAM, the religion of Mohammed, is the latest among the historical religions, a late after-impulse of the religion-forming power of the Semitic race. Founded by the prophet Mohammed under Jewish and Christian influences among the half-barbaric Arabic people in the seventh century, Islamism shares the monotheistic, rigidly theocratic and legalistic character of Judaism, without its national limitation; with Christianity, it shares the claim and propagating impulse of world-religion, but without the wealth of religious thought and motives and without the mobility and the capacity for development which belongs to a world-religion. It might be maintained, probably, that Islamism is the Jewish idea of theocracy carried out on a larger scale by the youthful national vigor of the Arabians, well, calculated to discipline raw barbaric peoples, but a brake on the progress of free human civilization.

The religion of the Arabs before Mohammed was the ancient Semitic heathenism, which had preserved itself longest in its ancient form among them. The separate tribes had their individual gods

## Islam

which differed from one another only in the forms of worship in use at the local sanctuaries. Allah was the species-name for god, and even before Mohammed, he was placed above the others as an independent god, the highest of all; the oldest of these gods, Allat (Mistress), Utza and Manat, were subordinated to Allah, as his daughters. Beside these and several other nature-gods, the Dschinns, good and evil spirits, played a great rôle in the popular religion. As dwelling-places and manifestations of the presence of the gods, the cult regarded stones preferably, but trees and wells served also; to them sanctuaries were attached, at which the separate tribes met once a year for an adoration of the god in common. The Caaba, the sanctuary at Mecca stood in especially high regard; it was a four-cornered house, into the wall of which there had been built a black stone, as the fetish of the god who was native to those parts (Hobal or Allah). This sanctuary belonged to the tribe of the .Koreishites; with especial solemnity, they celebrated the annual holy festival, and caravans from all of Central Arabia came thither. With this celebration, a lively market for trade was combined, and there wares and thoughts, as well as the latest productions of the song-writers, were exchanged. This worldly activity predominated at these festivals; true, the ancient rites were attended, but the faith in the old gods was beginning to disintegrate in the sixth century. So much the more could the mono-

## Religion and Historic Faiths

theistic faith of the Jews and Christians, scattered here and there among the colonies or living in some districts of Arabia as hermits, wield an attractive influence upon the more earnest spirits among them. Before Mohammed's day, there were several such men among the Arabs who had thrown off the worship of heathen idols, believed in one God and his world judgment, and lived serious ascetic lives; they were known as "Hanifites," which is probably derived from the Syriac word for heretics or the Arabic word for separatists. The greatest number of them were found at Mecca and Medina, and though they took no steps toward the formation of a congregation or the dissemination of their beliefs by propaganda, nevertheless, they were the forerunners of Islamism and paved the way for the work of Mohammed.

Born about 570 A.D., Mohammed belonged to the ruling tribe of the Koreishites at Mecca. Early orphaned, he grew up in the poorest of circumstances, until he entered the service of Khadijah, the widow of a rich merchant, whom he married when he was twenty-five years of age and with whom he lived a happy married life until her death. Frequently his mercantile pursuits led him to Syria and Palestine, and there he came in contact with Jews and Christians. But the first stirrings of his religious awakenings came from the pious Hanifites of Mecca. He began to withdraw into solitude and reflect upon the folly of the heathen, who lived

## Islam

along certain of their beliefs, thoughtless of the judgment of God. Thus, he, too, became a Hanifite and sought salvation for his soul in "Islam," that means, self-surrender to the one true God. The first impulse to disseminate this faith in his environment came from a vision, which, in his fortieth year, he experienced during a night-watch on the holy mountain near Mecca. An angel, bearing a scroll in his hand, appeared to him and commanded: "Read, in the name of thy Lord, who, out of a single drop, hath created men. Read, for thy Lord is the Almighty, who hath taught by this writing, what man hath not known. Yea, verily, man walketh in his folly, when he opines that he is sufficient unto himself; to thy Lord, must they all return." This first vision roused him to great excitement; he believed himself possessed by a Dschinn, and his restlessness was the more oppressive, because a space of time elapsed before the reappearance of the vision. Then it did come again and in the form of a positive command: "Rise and Warn. Glorify thy Lord and wait upon him." This command came repeatedly and finally Mohammed was convinced that he was called by God to be the prophet to his people. That this conviction was an earnest one, and rested, just as much as with the prophets of Israel, upon an irresistible pressure of conscience which seemed to him to be divine revelation, there can be no doubt; and the fact that later pronouncements of the prophet, which he also enunciated as

## Religion and Historic Faiths

“revelations,” were undeniably the outcome of unhampered reflection and the prudent weighing of circumstances, does not alter matters in the least.

At first Mohammed preached in the narrow circle of his relatives and his friends. He did not seek to found a new religion, but rather to reintroduce Abraham’s ancient belief in God, as it was written in the heavenly book, from which the prophets of the Jews and the Christians had ever received their revelations. He demanded of his adherents that they submit to Allah, as the highest master and righteous judge, before whose judgment-seat they would all have to appear; they should abandon their heathen blasphemy, they should pray regularly and give alms without hope of profit or reward. New revelations soon impelled him to appear publicly before his fellow-citizens and condemn their heathenism. They hearkened not to him, but derided him as a madman, as one possessed. Derision roused his sensibility, the temper of his preaching became more acrid, he threatened his countrymen with the terrible punishments which God meted out here and beyond. The bitterness against him was heightened by this method, until it resulted in deadly hatred and serious persecutions. This served but to confirm the prophet in the conviction that his calling was divine and the impression of loyalty to conviction in the face of dire oppression brought enthusiastic followers, especially from among the poor and the enslaved. However,

## Islam

at Mecca, where the mass of the people were bound to the religion of former days by the material benefits accruing to a much-visited place of pilgrimage, the prophet's cause seemed hopeless. At this time, a host of friends from Medina, making a festal pilgrimage to Mecca, arrived and were so enthused by the imposing impression of his personality, that they solemnly assured him of their loyalty in life and death and induced him to move over to Medina. This was the decisive turning-point for his cause; from this flight (Hegira) in the year 622, dates the beginning of Islamism as a religious community.

In his new surroundings amid greater successes, the activity of Mohammed took new directions. In Mecca, he had been the prophet of a religious faith, without religious motives, but in Medina, he soon became the founder and ruler of a religious-political commonalty, which formed the basis of the theocracy of Islamism. His great energy and prudence soon subjected all the inhabitants of the city to his social arrangement and ritual commands. Praying became a form of military exercise; the mosque became the great exercise-ground and the ritual was the drill-system of Islam, which thus implanted solidarity and a strict discipline in its armies. Alms became a regular tax and formed the basis of the financeering of the new theocracy. At the same time with the growth of this closer alliance of the faithful, there grew up the exclusion of those not of the faith, particularly against the



## Religion and Historic Faiths

Jews, whom Mohammed had regarded before as his friends, but whom, after his assumption of the rôle of political organizer of the Arabic theocracy, he treated as uncomfortable rivals of his idea and enemies of his autocratic rule. Mohammed's foundation of a state on the basis of a common religious impulse as a substitute for the old heathen anarchy of the Arabs, was the greatest deed of his life and most decisive for the future; the congregation of Medina was the instrument, their heroic faith was the power, through which Islamism achieved its world-historical successes. It is his work at Medina which makes up the greatest part of his historical importance, and here the prophet was concealed for the most part behind the statesman. As such, Mohammed undeniably performed a great work, but, naturally, he was not choice in the selection of his means. Many a deed of cruelty, revenge and deceit may have to be judged more mildly from the standpoint of the popular morals of the Arabs; but in the character-picture of a prophet and founder of a religion (for to him the title is more applicable than to any one else), they will and must remain dark spots.

Not only did the fall of Mecca, which decided the victory of Mohammed over the Arabs, serve as the ground-work for subsequent Islamic conquests, but it also deeply influenced the inner configuration of the new religion. Of this victory, too, the ancient saying was true: *Victa victores cepit*. Inasmuch

## Islam

as Mohammed embodied the heathen rites of the Caaba at Mecca and the celebration of the pilgrim-festival which was native there into his religion, he made a concession to the old heathenism of the Arabs which crassly contradicted the fundamental monotheistic and universalistic idea of his religion. Glossing it over by the claim that Abraham had founded these heathen customs was a crude deception, conscious or unconscious. The real motive of this retrogression to fetishistic superstition lay in a prudent regard of the prejudices and advantages of his countrymen, whose city was thereby elevated in quite different fashion from before into the central point of national culture. In the proportion that Islamism became bound to the Arabic capital as its permanent center, its claim to the title of a general "world-religion" became invalid; at bottom, it always remained an enlarged national-Arabic theocracy by force of arms, just as the Jewish-messianic realm was to become a national-Jewish theocracy. As a national theocracy, Islamism did become a mighty power in the world's history, but its influence upon the religious development of mankind was rather a hindrance than a help. From the beginning, its religious content was limited and impure; and its "revelation" and book-faith was a hindrance to all healthy progress.

In the beginning, the sayings of Mohammed were preserved by word of mouth only; toward the close

## Religion and Historic Faiths

of the first generation of his congregation, they were committed to writing. In order to harmonize the different readings of the various collections of sayings, Caliph Othman the Third ordered' Zaid, Mohammed's secretary, to make an official edition, which resulted in the sacred book of Islamism, the Koran. Throughout, the style is rhymed prose; the sayings of the older period are laconic, after the fashion of oracular sayings, but they soon become more prolix, full of artificial rhetoric and endless repetitions—dry and wearisome reading for a healthy taste. Naturally, this never hindered the faithful of Islam from regarding the book as exactly that which it laid claim to being, namely, the unmediated word of God, which had existed from eternity as the “uncreated word” in a celestial original and had been revealed to Mohammed by the angel Gabriel. Alongside the Koran, Islamism holds a second rule of faith—tradition, Sonna. This contains precise ordinances concerning every manner of external ceremonial as well as civic and personal life; all of these, often without foundation, are traced back to utterances of Mohammed. Besides, the traditions contain a mass of miraculous legends, of which the Koran had none, since Mohammed expressly discountenanced the rage for miracles and pointed out the great wonders of God in nature.

Islamic teaching rests upon five pillars, which come from Mohammed himself: (1). Belief in the

## Islam

all-one God, 'Allah, and in Mohammed as his prophet; (2). Prayers five times a day in set form, with the face turned toward Mecca; (3). The giving of alms, later regulated as a poor-tax; (4). Fasts, later limited to the daylight hours of the month Ramadhan; (5). Pilgrimages to Mecca, a duty devolving on every believer at least once in his life. The greater the poverty of spiritual content in the teaching, the more minute are the details of the ceremonial prescribed, down to the most minute. The fundamental dogma is that of the unity of God; but concerning the nature of God, Mohammed made no deeper reflections. He conceived God as the supermundane, almighty ruler, similar to an Oriental despot; terrible in his anger and then again benevolent, delaying judgment in his benevolence, arbitrary in reward and punishment, with a will irresistible as inconceivable, demanding blind submission of men and even then his grace uncertain. This all-deciding freedom of God's despotic will was expressed, though without logical completeness, in the form of an absolute predestination. Mohammed had no difficulty in contributing even immoral features, such as revenge and deception, which naturally belong to the typical Oriental despot, to his idea of God. This gloomy view of God corresponds to a pessimistic view of the world; the world is compared to a dung-heap full of decaying bones, and its misery is so great that only the tortures of hell exceed it. Just as horrible as the

## Religion and Historic Faiths

hell, so joyous is the description of the heavenly paradise, whose drinking-bouts shall compensate the pious for the prescribed abstinence from the enjoyment of wine during life on earth.

God, it is said, has revealed himself through thousands of prophets in all times; most prominent among these are Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Mohammed; and Mohammed is not only the last but the greatest of them, he alone being destined for all men. To him, God has revealed Himself mainly through the angel Gabriel, but partly also, in direct instructions given in heaven, to which he (Mohammed) had been transported bodily at various times. Beyond this, Mohammed made no claim to supernatural attributes, not even that of moral perfection; he had erred and sinned and needed forgiveness like other men. He sought to be only a preacher, a monitor, the first of the faithful (Moslem); his mission had been fulfilled in the revelation of the sacred book, and it is not his province to be a permanent mediator between God and men. An old tradition has him say: "Praise me not, as Jesus, the son of Marjam was praised." The acknowledgment of Jesus as a prophet who had gone before, did not hinder Mohammed in any way from a denial of Christianity, which he pronounced as a falsification of the true teaching of Jesus. The doctrine that Jesus was the Son of God, was particularly offensive to him; he thought that that was a palpable lie, because he was certain that God had no

## Islam

wife; he rejected the doctrine of the Trinity which he conceived as a heavenly family consisting of a father, mother and son (probably one of the Oriental sects through their gnostic mythology had given him that notion, just as the six principal prophets are reminiscent of the Elkesaitic-clementian gnosticism.

To the conflict over the regular succession to the prophet, the origin of the sect of Shiah is to be ascribed; from the end of the seventh century, they were dominant in Persia. They would acknowledge only Ali, the son-in-law of Mohammed, the husband of his daughter Fatima, and their descendants as the proper "Imam, heads of the congregation." This schism, at first merely political in nature, soon acquired a religious significance through the doctrine of the continuity of the chain of prophets. Whereas orthodox Islam looks upon Mohammed as the last of the prophets, the Shiahs believed that the divine revelation continued through Ali and his family; as the "Wali" (confidant) of God, they set Ali even above Mohammed and the anniversary of the death of Ali's son, Hosein, who fell at Kerbela in 680, they regarded as a much more important celebration than even the great feast at Mecca. One extreme branch of Shiahs of Persia maintained that Ali and the successive legitimate Imams were the continuous incarnation of the deity, which recalls the Thibetan doctrine of Dalai-

## Religion and Historic Faiths

lama. How deeply rooted this thought, originally alien to Islamism, grew to be among the Persians, was made manifest in the second half of the last century by the rise of the Babists, a sect founded by Mirza Ali Mohammed, who claimed to be the highest embodiment of that same divine spirit: which had appeared before in Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Mohammed.

It might seem, for a time, that freer thought was seeking expression in Islam. The sect of the Mutazilites raised objections to the orthodox teaching of the eternity and infallibility of the Koran, the doctrine of predestination, and to the doctrine of an arbitrary God, in contradiction to which they laid the greatest stress on the righteousness of God. In most instances, orthodoxy found it most comfortable to render these rationalists harmless by the temporal arm of the Caliph; however, in the struggle with them, there developed a theology which sought to employ the dialectics learned from the heretics in defense of the orthodox doctrines. 'Al-Ashari (died 941), its most illustrious representative, may be regarded as the founder of the dogmatic theology of Islamism. In the question of predestination, for example, he decided entirely in the sense of the Christian Semipelagians: it is the part of man to will, but it belongs to God to fulfill. Again, in the case of the sinlessness of the prophet: the possibility of sinful action was in him, but the divine watchfulness united with his own merit as

## Islam

the prophet had never permitted the realization. But the rationalists were not defeated by the fineness of this dialectic play, but by immutable character inherent in Islamism from the beginning, they were overthrown. The great mass of the people recognized their Allah and the Allah of Mohammed, not in the God of the Mutazilites whose nature was righteousness, but in the God of the orthodox, the Almighty, who was bound to no other law but his own arbitrary will.

A peculiarity of Persian Islamism, not less interesting is Sufism, a mystical-speculative tendency, some of which was deeply pious and given to flights of high thinking. Certain it is that this was not a genuine product of Arabian Islamism, even though it must remain undecided whether it owes its origin to ancient Persian, Indian or Neo-platonic gnosticism. According to the Sufi theory, the world is a flowing out of and flowing back into God. The soul of man is part of the divine being, and its destiny is union with God, which is perfected in three planes. Upon the first plane, the plane of law, God is held to be the Lord beyond who desires to be worshipped with all the traditional ceremonies. Upon the second plane, comes the knowledge that external works are without value for those who know, and in their stead there must be placed an ascetic freeing of the spirit from sensuality. Through continuous concentration of thought, one may arrive finally at the condition of enthusiasm



## Religion and Historic Faiths

and ecstasy which, by frequent recurrence, leads to the third and highest plane, upon which, God is no longer sought outside of one's self either by ritualistic or ascetic works, but upon which, the immanence in one's own spirit come into consciousness. For the wise man and the mystic who has attained this knowledge, the varying doctrines and ordinances of the different religions have lost their meaning. Here are some examples of the thought-laden, pious poems of the Persian mystic, Dschelaleddin Rumi (1207-1275) :\*

“When the pious pray, glory and praise, indeed,  
Into one, all worship-offerings knead.  
What, in his faith, each one, praying says,  
Not the water, but the glass divides.  
All glory and all praise flow but for the one,  
Into one vessel; God pours the glasses all.  
Know this, from God's light emanates each pray'r,  
From form or fissure comes the false that's there.  
Upon a wall, when simple sunlight plays,  
The one sun's shattered to a thousand rays.

“Those who to Caaba make pilgrimage,  
And reach at length their goal,  
See an old house standing  
In a seedless vale.  
They went there, God to see  
And now they circle 'round the house.  
Circling thus time after time, they wait  
Until a voice sounds on the air:  
Fools, do ye call upon a stone?  
Who would beg bread of stone?

\*The German versions are by Tholuk and Rueckert.

## Islam

If 'tis God's temple that ye seek,  
Search within; within your hearts, 'tis built.  
Happy he who turns in unto himself,  
Travelling no deserts in pilgrimage.

. . . . .  
"O love, I bear thee witness. Sad as the night, I wept  
And the rays of thy sun brought day to me.  
Soul of my soul, I am thou and thou art I,  
Thou art all, and thro' thee, I woke to all.  
Sweetness art thou and intoxication.  
The pearl-fraught sea art thou, the mine of gold.  
He who comes near to thee, gives up his soul to thee,  
Dies when thy mouth is wroth, dies when thine eye doth  
smile.  
First doth thy favor lure the loving ones to thee,  
Then comes thy wrath and chokes the weaklings in the  
fray.  
Dream-hosts serve thee and wraiths of fancy go  
Forth with fiery weapons as thy battle-array;  
Flame flaunts the banner of thy unending sway,  
Burning until worlds bow down before thee.  
Each moment, terrors new thou sendest forth,  
Making the soul tremble as a little child;  
Then, if the soul yield and thou dost enter in,  
Victorious,—thy coming is kindlier than she had thought.

. . . . .  
"O bird, for freedom calling,  
And thou, whom the body-cage is galling,  
O soul, wouldst thou be free?  
Then love the love that tameth thee.  
'Tis love that tightens ev'ry tie,  
'Tis love the strongest lock can pry;  
Love's the pure music of the spheres,  
No clanking chains therein one hears.  
The world is God's mirror clear,  
Except thy eye be dazzled here;  
Gaze in the glass with loving glance  
And be confounded by God's brilliance;

## Religion and Historic Faiths

Praise him, O soul, drunk with love,  
Winging at dawn, like the lark, above.

. . . . .

"Make no complaint that thou art cast in chains,  
Make no complaint that thou must bear earth's pains  
Complain not that the wide world is restraint,  
The world becomes a jail thro' thy complaint.  
Ask not how will this riddle finally unfold;  
Beautifully, tho' thy question be untold.  
Say not: Love hath forsaken me.  
Whom hath love forsaken? I beg of thee.  
Be bold when grim death would make thee fear,  
Death yields to those who boldly face him here.  
Chase not worldly pleasures as the fleet hart;  
It turns into a lion and plays the hunter's part.  
Cast not thyself in chains, O heart, then canst thou  
Make no complaint that thou art cast in chains.

. . . . .

"I am the grape, come thou and be the vine,  
The elm, round which my branching arms entwine.  
I am the ivy, cedar, be my stem,  
That I stay not dead on the moist earth.  
I am the bird, come thou and be my wings,  
That I may soar aloft to thy high heav'n.  
I am the steed, come thou and be my spurs,  
That I may strive to reach thy race-course goal.  
I am the bed of roses, be thou my rose,  
That I nourish not sorry weeds.  
I am the East, O sun, rise thou in me,  
From my cloud-fabric, thou light, arise,  
I am the night, be thou my crown of stars,  
That, self-fearing, I tremble not, when 'tis dark.

. . . . .

"Commingle with thy soul hath mine  
As water mingles with the wine.  
Who can the wine and water part?  
Who rend our union, mine and thine?  
My larger self art thou become;

## Islam

This smaller self will I resign.  
My nature hast thou taken on;  
Shall, nay, must I not take thine?  
•For aye, hast thou affirmèd me  
That I deny thee not in time.  
Thy love-aroma permeating me  
Marrow nor bone can e'er resign.  
Flutelike, upon thy lips I rest,  
Lutelike, upon thy lap, recline.  
One breath lend thou, for I would sigh,  
One blow strike thou, for I would pine,  
Sweet are my sighs and sweet my tears  
For all the world thinks joy is mine.  
Deep in my soul's depths dost thou rest  
And mirror'd there's thy heaven sublime.  
O, precious jewel in my shaft,  
O, pearl in my mussel-shrine."







